

GURDWARA

The Sikh House of Worship
Discipline and Procedures

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DEDICATED

**To the Holy Gurdwara Sahib Sacvi and its Devoted
Sangat**

To Celebrate Memory of

THE FIRST DHARAMSALA

Established By Bhai Lalo, Under Instructions From

The Great Master

Guru Nanak Dev

INFORMATION

Gurdwara Discipline and Procedures

This book is unique and is of its own kind. So far, no such work has been undertaken in this language, form and format. It imparts information about the discipline and procedures in a Gurdwara. It is hoped that this work will fill in a great need, and will be useful for everyone.

For writing this work, the help of Reht Maryada by Shromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (S.G.P.C.), Amritsar, reprinted 1998 AD., Gurmatt Martand by Bhai Kahn Singh, Nabha, published by S.G.P.C., 1979 AD., Gurbani Paath Darshan, by Giani Gurbachan Singh Khalsa Bhindranwale, printed 1988 AD, and such other books, has been taken.

This book has been written by Dr. Kulwant Singh Khokhar, 12502, Nightingale Drive, Chester, Virginia 23836, USA, and holds all its rights.

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GURDWARA SAHIB

Gurdwara - Discipline and procedures

The following books are recommended for references –

- * Sikh Reht Maryada, S.G.P.C., Amritsar, 1998.
- * Rehtnamae, Piara Singh Padam, Bhai Chatar Singh Jiwan Singh, Amritsar, 1991.
- * Gurmatt Martand Part I and Part II, Kahn Singh Nabha. Published by S.G.P.C., Amritsar, 1979. It is a good book to learn about the Sikh faith.
- * Sada Itihas Part I, Satbir Singh, New Book Company, Jalandhar, 1971.

A few special persons are invited to sit in the front, and may be on the stage itself in special celebrations. Suitable seats should be there for the handicapped.

A thin mattress covered with a cloth sheet may be used to mark the place for Ragis - devotional singers, to sit, or for a bride and groom to sit there for their marriage ceremony. Ragis may sit on the stage itself. Some places provide a raised platform for Ragis, so that they are visible to the congregation. Such a platform should not be higher than the seat for Guru Granth Sahib.

It is appropriated to introduce to the Sangat the distinguished visitors, guest Ragis (devotional singers), visiting speakers and new comers etc.

Nothing should irritate or agitate the Gurdwara Sewadar (a person serving there). A Sewadar who cannot adjust, should keep off the Sewa.

Gurdwara

It is the place of worship in the Sikh way

In a Gurdwara, main worship services are morning and evening, twice a day. Depending on the local needs, arrangements, and facilities, Gurdwara may be open the whole day, or may have some restrictions of the time.

It is called Gurdwara Sahib, which can be literally translated as follows: Gur – of the Guru; Dwara – house; and Sahib – Master, an honorific word. It is “the Revered Gurdwara” – God’s place. Gur is derived from the word Guru which means the one who removes the darkness of mind i.e. ignorance (by giving knowledge).

A Gurdwara has no specific design. Usually, at the top, it has a central bigger dome and smaller domes may be there on its sides.

Identity of the place is that a saffron, triangular Nishan Sahib – the Sikh flag,, with its symbols and a double edged sword atop, flutters on the building, or in its vicinity - compound. As usual, Deras – establishments of sadhs (saints), do not fly Nishan Sahib, thereby claiming it to be their personal property.

Gurdwara Belongs to the Guru

A Gurdwara belongs to the Guru – the Sikh Prophets, and Sangat i.e. the Khalsa Panth – the Sikh world (the Sikh community). This is a place for everyone with no discrimination of color, caste, sex, faith, status, or country. Everyone can go there with full liberty within the norms of the Sikh ethics.

Gurdwara - Ideal

An ideal Gurdwara is the one where everyone is welcome, and he or she gets peace of mind and spiritual uplift. It should have the facilities to make it a place where everyone can go with freedom, like an honored guest. A visitor is temporarily provided a shelter, food, bed and bedding, free of any cost. Each Gurdwara may not be able to comply with all this due to local restrictions, or resources.

Gurdwara - Purpose

A Gurdwara is a place to learn every aspect of the Sikh faith, including its Scriptures, history and practices. Here, we get the lesson of living the Sikh way: an ideal life, tabulated below –

- * The love of man - humility, politeness, sweetness. selfless love, selfless service, compassion, protection of the weak and sharing the boons with the needy.

- * Sincerity, loyalty, honesty, truthfulness, forgiveness.

- * The love for rights, equality, , justice, and liberty.

- * Love of the self – Control on lust, anger, greed, attachment to the family and the world, to attain an evolved life.

- * Freedom from superstitions.

- * The love for others - respect, understand, accommodate others and adjust with them. These are essential constituents of self-evolution, and we inculcate these by listening to, reciting, and singing Gurbani i.e. the Guru's Word (Scriptures), and humble submission to the Lord for his love, protection, and care through invocation.

- * No discrimination of sex, status, color, caste, faith or country.

- * To pray for the well-being of everyone, and high morale to be ethical.

- * Contentment, peace of mind, happiness through submission to God, His kindness, and by practicing self-restraint.

- * The love of God - God orientation.

Submission to the Lord i.e. acceptance of His will.

The Sikhs live a simple life free from superstitions and pray only to one God and to none else. Sikhs believe in liberty, equality and justice. They value their own rights, and honor those of the others. They do not practice discrimination of any kind. For them, men and women are equal.

Gurdwara - Essential Services

Purpose of a Gurdwara is to cultivate the peace of mind. This holy place is an important instrument for achieving this by helping to evolve the inner self by God orientation. For this, it leads the people on the easy path of worshipping God, and provides the following services -

1. Prayer

Worship of only one God is carried out in the set and standard (traditional) Sikh-way, in the presence of Guru Granth Sahib – the Sikh Holy Book. Singing of the Holy Hymns, sermons, and an invocation (humble prayer) to God for His mercy (blessings), and well-being of everyone, is the established way.

2. Langar

community food, served equally to everyone without any discrimination of faith, place, color, sex, status or position etc. This helps to learn equality and brotherhood of the human beings. This is an absolutely free and selfless service. Langar is always vegetarian and dishes never have any meat, eggs etc. The religious gatherings serve only water, sodas, milk preparations, and never any sort of intoxicating drinks

3. Sikh Faith - Promotion

Promotion of the faith is achieved through –

*** Ethical Living**

The Sikh faith does not resort to conversion. Most important way of its promotion is through personal example of ethical and God oriented living. Their elevated living encompasses all the qualities of an ideal living tabulated above. It is supported by -

*** Preaching**

Preaching of the Sikh philosophy plays the major role. All are preached to be understanding, accommodating, adjusting, and hard working. It teaches equality, freedom from discriminations, and worship of God. Women are considered equal to men in every respect,

religious, social, or political. They equally share the worship, its discipline and procedures. These enjoy the equal human values and rights.

*** Amrit**

Holding Amrit Ceremony. Amrit is the holy drink

Amrit-Sanchar, Amrit-Parchar, Amrit-Chhakaanaa, or Khandae-Baatae Dee Pahul Daenee, is to promote drinking of Amrit.

Amrit is given for inducting the people into the Sikh faith. The people take it with their own free will, impressed by the Sikh-living and philosophy of the faith. It is not forced on anyone.

*** Religious Teaching**

It is very important to hold religious classes to attach the children to their faith - Gurbani (Scriptures), Guru, God, and to develop them as ideal peace-loving and law-abiding citizens, aware of their rights and duties, and a keen desire for liberty.

Library of the Sikh faith is imperative for the Gurdwara. It should have sufficient collection of important reference, history, and other books, to promote the knowledge of the faith, and of original culture including their language. Anyone who does not know and practice his or her faith is like an unprotected child. Unaware and ignorant about his or her faith, he or she will have no value or dignity of it, and will hate, talk bitterly, and derogate it. He or she will be ever ready to fall into the lap i.e. trap of conversion, when mislead by a clever member of any other faith. Evidently, ignorance about the faith is the path of uprooting and destroying one's own self.

Gurdwara - Selfless Service

Prayer, Langar, and selfless service, is closely linked to attain a living of high level. Everyone is equally welcome to the prayer hall and to the Langar i.e. dining hall. All these services are without any obligation.

Selfless service of any sort in the Gurdwara, Sangat (congregation), and community, or out in the public has its own importance. If anyone, may be from outside the community, needs a proper service urgently, it should be rendered with top priority. Such a service has to be selfless, and free from any discrimination .

The days of manually fanning the Sangat are gone, but still it may be needed sometimes. Any imaginable right service can be provided to the Gurdwara and Sangat.

Care of Shoes

Care of the foot-wear of the visitors to the Gurdwara is taken as an important service. It teaches humility. A Gurdwara has a place to keep the shoes. The people do selfless service at such places. They humbly collect shoes from the visitors, keep them respectfully in the shelves, and politely return them when their owners come back. Some, reverently pick up the shoes, bow to them, clean, even polish, and keep them properly arranged. Mostly, this service is rendered with great devotion.

Gurdwara Yard Service

It is one of the superior services

An essential selfless service provided with a smile and dedication is to dust, wipe, wash, and keep the Gurdwara building and its surroundings clean and tidy. This involves maintenance of the Gurdwara yard and parking lot as well.

Water Stands

Water stands to provide drinking water to the needy are essential. It is the real need of India where the plains become burning hot in summers. Water fountains are useful.

Other Facilities

Gurdwaras do need all essential facilities like electricity for light, sound-system, air-conditioning, fans and electronic facilities. It should have kitchen, rest-rooms, bathrooms, store, place for the caretaker to stay, and if possible some rooms for the visitors etc. Gurdwara Sahib Sacvi has a lift.

Gurdwara - Religious Programs

Celebrations

Gurpurbs: Festivals i.e. important days of the Gurus – the Sikh Prophets. are celebrated with devotion and great fanfare. This includes birthdays and martyrdom days of the Gurus. These are celebrated by holding -

Akhand-Path

As a set precedence, mostly an Akhand-Paath (continuous recitation of Guru Granth Sahib – the Sikh Holy Book), from its start to its end is done.

Kirtan

Singing of the Holy Hymns is performed.

Katha

Sermons are delivered and preaching is done. It includes history of the occasion being celebrated.

Speeches

Speeches to throw light on the occasion are arranged.

Langar

Food after the Gurdwara proceedings are over, is almost an integral part of all celebrations. Free food-stands are arranged all over, and everyone is served with selfless love and humility.

Water Stands

On such days, particularly in hot country like India, free water stands are arranged. Mostly, they serve fresh, iced clean water. Some, may serve Kachee-Lassee – sweet drink containing sugar, water and milk; sodas; and tea. Along with drinks, snacks and sweets may be served.

Fire Works

On the appropriate days – the days of happy celebrations, a Gurdwara may display fire-works. Golden Temple, Amritsar, displays a great fire-work on Diwali night to celebrate the return of Guru Hargobind from Gwalior. It also, makes a great fire-work show on the birth of Guru Ramdas.

Social Services

Any other voluntary service may be rendered collectively or individually. Food, clothes, and blankets may be distributed. These services are additional to the programs of the faith in the Gurdwara. The services might have been sponsored by someone.

Nishan Sahib Service

The Sikh flag has to be carefully maintained, and changed every year as a precedence on the Baisakhi day, April 13/14. It is changed earlier if damaged or its color fades away too much. Phuman (pompom at the tip of the flag) should be replaced when damaged.

Environment

Atmosphere inside a Gurdwara is of reverence, peace, love, serenity, sanctity, humility, silence, equality, tolerance, and of selfless service. Everyone has to understand, adjust, and accommodate. In case of any trespassing, beg pardon from the Guru, Sangat and the individual if any involved.

No one is prohibited to enter a Gurdwara, but it should be kept in the mind that a Gurdwara is a place of worship according to the Sikh tenets - code of ethics, precedence, procedures, and routines. No one should engage in any meaningless, negative and undesirable criticism, discussion, argument, or interfere with anything there even if the problem is serious and demanding immediate attention. The best is to bring your suggestions, complaints, or grievances to the notice of the management.

Contributions

Contributions in cash or kind are welcome in a Gurdwara. These are accepted in the prayer, as well as in the Langar halls. For this, the cashier, secretary, or president may be contacted. Contribution is voluntary, and there is no limit or binding on it. If possible, it may be liberal.

Best is to take out tithe – 1/10th of the income, for the humanitarian purposes. Service, particularly to the Gurdwara and Sangat, should be done with humility, as a contribution and it should better not be labeled “charity.” We give in the name of God out of what he gives to us. We have nothing of our own to give to Him!

A very practical way is to keep for such purposes some amount aside almost everyday. Go on adding it to a Golak – money-box, a pot or a carton. At home, offerings made to Guru Granth Sahib, serve the purpose of making collection well. When giving out of such a collection, we do not feel any sort of inhibition, because we are giving out of what already belongs to the Guru.

Collections, Personal

It has nothing to do with the Gurdwara collections.

Collections made personally e.g. at home, may be used for –

- * Guru Granth Sahib – For purchasing Guru Granth Sahib (Holy Book), and on any item needed for its service – Peerrhee or Manji Sahib (cot), Chandova (Chanani - canopy), Chaur (hair-wisp), Romalae (scarves, sheets, covers), pillows, Gutkae (mini prayer books), rosaries and decoration pieces, musical instruments, Agarbattee or Dhoop (scented sticks – incandescence, or scented paste), napkins. Any article of faith or needed for the prayer room may be purchased with this money. You may distribute such or any other useful items free of cost, or contribute these to Gurdwara for the use of Sangat (congregation). Some, distribute Gutkas, free.

- * Gurdwara - contributions to Gurdwaras.

- * Gurpurbs – contributions for celebrations of the Sikh holy days.

* Magazines – subscriptions to papers and magazines of the Sikh faith or community.

* Parshad - offering of Parshad (sanctified food, including Karrah-Parshad – the holy i.e. sanctified pudding), flowers etc. to Guru Granth Sahib - the Holy Book.

* Books – For adding religious books to your personal or Gurdwara, or even a public library.

* Langar – service with food. It may be done in a Gurdwara, at home, or anywhere outside. One may sponsor Langar at Gurdwara.

* Bhog – It is ceremony on completion of the recitation of Guru Granth Sahib.

* Kirtan – singing of the Holy Hymns. Payment to the singer may be made. It may be performed at home or anywhere else. Kirtan in a Gurdwara may be sponsored.

Charities – Any type of contributions in the name of God and for the humanity, for helping others even out of your own faith. Anyone with a genuine need may be served.

Any type of selfless service with the money you have collected is most welcome.

Gurdwara - General Services

Some Gurdwaras with ample budget may run devotional music schools, orphanages, academic schools and colleges, professional institutions like medical and engineering colleges, hospitals, senior's homes, destitute women's homes, and handicap-institutions. They may have their printing presses to publish the religious literature. These may as well, fulfill the other essential needs of the faith, community, and of the people in general.

Gurdwara - General Information

Information about Gurdwara

Stage

The stage should be high appropriate to the size of the prayer hall, so that it is visible to the people sitting at the back of the gathering (usual main entrance). It should not have a back light – natural or artificial. Such a light silhouettes the people at the stage, looking towards Sangat, and makes their faces dark and indiscernible. The light should fall on the faces (front) of those on the stage.

Palki – Palanquin

It is a wooden, metal, or masonry structure, with a raised seat to place Guru Granth Sahib on it. There is a dome at the top, on its four

corner pillars. It may have its own canopy under the dome, but even then the palanquin is placed under a large canopy above it. A small palanquin hinders the view and so, it has to be large enough.

Decorations

Palki – palanquin, is mostly decorated with real and artificial flowers, garlands, flower vases, weapons, mini lights, beads, and ornaments, etc. Palanquin itself, and the sheet spread down in front of it (like a train) receive most of decoration. The stage and hall may also be decorated.

Chandova - Canopy

It is also called Chandani (Chanani). Fixing it above a person is the sign of authority – a highly revered personality. It is to honor the Holy Book. Next to the ceiling, a canopy of the proper size is kept spread above it. It should fully cover the platform with raised seat of Guru Granth Sahib. It also protects the Holy Book from any dirt or insects falling from the ceiling.

Chauri, Chaur or Chanwar

It is an hair-wisp. It keeps flies and insects off.

It is worked over Guru Granth Sahib. The tail-hair of Suraa-Gaae (yak – mountain ox) are used to make it. Now, the cheap varieties made of plastic strands are available. The handle may be made of sandal or any other wood, plastic, or some metal – precious or ordinary. Chauris with white-metal, or nickel-plated handles are common.

Tosha-Khana (a store for precious and selected items) above the main entrance of Harimandir Sahib - Golden Temple, Amritsar, had a Chaur made of fine sandal-wood strands. It was offered by a Muslim saint from some eastern country. Perhaps, it was destroyed in attack on Harimandir Sahib in 1984 AD.

Canopy, Chauri etc. are the signs of authority and glory. The wisp is moved respectfully and gently, without making any showy movements or gestures. It should be worked calmly. Some wisps are heavy and may need both the hands to work these.

Aromatics

A subtle scent may be used, and even carefully applied to the cloth covers of the Holy Book. Incense is often burnt, but it should be mild, used sparsely, and should not bother the people especially on the stage. It should be carefully used to protect from fire. The candles and lamps should also be used very carefully. It is thoughtful to keep such things on the fireproof plates, and to have a fire extinguisher handy. Someone should keep a watch when such things are used. Room

refreshing sprays are handy and safe. Sweet smelling flowers, and potpourris may be used.

Kumbh, Jote (Jyoti), Red Cloth

During any sort of Guru Granth recitation, may be Akhand Paath (continuous recitation), in Gurdwara or at home, a burning lamp, and a pot of water with its mouth covered with red cloth, need not be kept in front of Guru Granth Sahib. Kumbh – pot of water, represents Jall-Devta (water god); Jote – burning lamp, is Agani Devta (fire god); and red cloth denotes a Devi – goddess. Sikhs do not believe in these and other gods and goddesses.

A pitcher of water with covered mouth may be fine as a fire extinguisher. After culmination of Akhand Paath (continuous recitation of the Holy Book) some take this water as Amrit (sanctified water). They drink and distribute it as Parshad (holy water), and sprinkle it in and around their house. The left over water is given to plants, so that it does not go to a dirty drain.

A Jote – lamp, is good as an emergency light. At some Gurdwaras (Harimandir Sahib, Amritsar), a Jote is kept burning. Pure Ghee (butter oil) is used in it. Perhaps, this Jote is a memorial to someone linked to that place. A Jote represents light i.e. spirituality. Some rever such a Jote. To keep it or not is a personal choice of the local Sangat. It is not a must or essential, and is not an article of faith. Sikhs do not believe in such unnecessary items. At some places, such things keep going on as some set old time precedence even without knowing the reality. Things keep on entering and going out of a faith under the influence of environment. We have to keep a watch to stay free from superstitions etc.

Pictures

Use of pictures in a Gurdwara or at home

Sikhs do not worship pictures of their Gurus or related to them. Of course, these remind the great Gurus and provide a basis for imagination. Many Gurdwaras and other holy places, or places related to the Gurus, put such pictures on the walls. It is not in a very good taste to place pictures before the Holy Granth. It is better to put them elsewhere. Bowing or bowing with folded hands to a picture of the Guru, with his reverence and greatness in mind, or placing an incense or a few flowers before it, although not appreciated, is absolutely a personal and different thing from worshipping a picture. It is great if the Guru's grandeur comes to the mind when standing before his picture, and in his honor the hands get folded and head bows down.

If the human role models are rare or not there, at least the pictures of the Gurus can influence and give a lead to the spiritual path! We should draw incentive from these, and not sit down to worship them.

Worship of a picture. - It is worship of the picture if we place incense, flowers etc. before it and bow down, sing its praise, practice other gestures of devotion before it, and make the picture a primary object of worship and supplication like the people doing to a deity - statue. Sikhs do not practice such things, and so they do not worship pictures.

Frescos etc. may be seen even inside the historical Gurdwaras. Ancient paintings of the Gurus, or scenes from their lives may also be there. Some Gurdwara walls or domes may have pressed metal work to depict scenes from the lives of the Gurus.

Gurdwaras may put up pictures in the library or in a separate gallery. It is a good idea for a Gurdwara to have its museum and to keep pictures and painting there.


Statues of the Gurus are not acceptable - the Sikh world does not worship, or approve these. The Sikhs avoid purchasing, or keeping the statues of the Gurus in their homes. Anyone preparing these as business for selling is not approved.

Nishan Sahib

* Dedication – Unless, Nishan Sahib - the Sikh Flag, flutters on or at the place, it is not considered a Gurdwara. Hoisting a Nishan Sahib dedicates a place to the Guru, and to the Sangat (Khalsa Panth – the Sikh world).

* Dignity of the Khalsa - Nishan Sahib is considered holy and is revered (honored). It is dignity of the Khalsa. It represents sovereignty of the Guru and his subjects, and as well spirituality and independence - liberty of the mind and body.

* Color - This flag is saffron colored (not Gaerva – brick-red, like that of the others). Nihang Singh's have the blue colored Sikh flag.

* Shape and Symbols - triangular in shape, and has the Sikh symbol on it. The symbol is called Ik-Oankar ੴ. With time, "Khanda-Chakkar-Kirpan"  also got introduced as a symbol. This has a central ring with double-edged sword in its center, and two curved swords on its sides. The ring is flat, sharp edged throwing weapon – quoit. Usually, both these symbols are there, one on each side of the flag. The Sikh flag has a steel Khanda - double edged sword at its top. Its pole has a cover.

* Dastar, Flag, Pompom - Between Khanda at the top and triangular flag (at their junction), is tied to the pole a Dastar – a length

of narrow, blue colored cloth. To the tip of the triangular flag itself, is tied a black pompom from a short length of black string.

* Reverence – Sikhs rever their flag. At some Gurdwaras, especially in memory of Guru Gobind Singh e.g. at Paunta Sahib, the Sangat goes around Nishan Sahib singing Shabads of the Tenth Guru. They do so morning and evening to honor Nishan Sahib. There are two flags on some Gurdwaras where Guru Hargobind visited.

Nagara - Dhaunsa or Naqara

Gurdwaras keep a Dhaunsa (Naqara, Ranjit-Nagara) – kettledrum, placed on a high stand. It is a big bowl shaped drum beaten with two sticks. It makes a booming, resonant, dull, loud sound reaching great distances. This is a war-drum beaten to lead the soldiers to announce their presence, approach or attack. This sound is encouraging and raises the morale as well as stamina. As well, it scares the enemies.

In a Gurdwara, A Naqara is beaten twice a day, one time at each step of Ardas – invocation, when the congregation shouts out “Waheguru,” and continuously for some time at the end of Ardas.

Gurdwara Requirements

Some important requirements in a Gurdwara

A Gurdwara should have the following facilities –

Library

It should be well maintained to keep the book-log. A library is very important. The Gurdwara should have a good, well library. There should be a good collection of Sikh literature and help books particularly suitable for children and the youth. It is important to avail the help of electronics, including Internet, and of the recording facilities.

Nursery

A Gurdwara should have a nursery for better control of small children, and freedom to parents to attend worship. The duty in turn can be assigned to Sangat (congregation). Children should not be allowed to run around in the prayer or Langar halls. It is responsibility of the parents to take care of their wards, and to keep them quiet. No one should create any disturbance.

Classroom

The Gurdwara should have a school to impart education of the faith including Gurbani (Scriptures, the Holy Hymns), history, and the Punjabi language. It should also teach the devotional music to children, youth, and also to the adults.

Guru Granth Sahib is originally written in the Gurmukhi script. Learning this script is important for correct phonation of Gurbani, and to go deep into its meanings. Without this, and from translations in other languages, we usually get only approximations to the meanings.

Gurbani - Reading

Reading Gurbani –

To learn correct reading (recitation) of Gurbani is very important.

Phonation of Gurbani.

It is very important to learn phonation for correct recitation of Gurbani. Every Lagg (addendum– attachment) linked to a Gurmukhi letter effects phonation of the word, and modifies its meanings.

Phonation is best learnt from someone who knows it. Where such a person is not available, the electronic media, visual aids, video and audio recordings can help.

To teach reading and phonation of Gurbani

For this purpose, the sequence of teaching to a student is -

- * To teach Gurmukhi (Punjabi)
- * Study Panj-Granthi - Book containing the following Banis –
 - i - Jappu ji Sahib ii - Shabad Hazare (Patshahee - V)
 - iii – Rahras iv - Kirtan Sohela vi - Dakhnee-Oankar
 - vii - Sidh-Gosht. viii - Anand Sahib. ix - Bawan Akhri.
 - x - Sukhmani Sahib xi - Asa Dee Vaar
- * Study Dass-Granthi: the Bani of the Tenth Guru – i - Jaap Sahib,
 - ii - Shabad Hazarae iii - Patshaahee Dassveen v - Akal Ustat vi - Bachittar Natakk vii - Chandee Charittar
 - viii Gian Parbodh
- * Study Bhagat Banee
- * Study Vaaran by Bhai Gurdas

After this, the student is put to learn Guru Granth Sahib. This is called “Guru dae charnee lagnaa”- to put at the feet of the Guru.

The students learn recitation of Nit Nem, and many recite it by heart. Presently (2003 AD.), the prescribed Banis of Nit Nem are –

- i - Jappu ji Sahib (Guru Nanak) ii - Jaap Sahib (Tenth Guru)
- iii - Savai-ae Pateshahee Dasveen, “Sravag sudh smoooh sidhaan kaae) iv - Rahras v - Kirtan Sohela.

Facility for learning Guru Granth Sahib - the Holy Book, in the proper sequence, may not be available everywhere, especially in the

overseas countries. At such places, help of someone who knows it, may be availed to learn Gurmukhi, Nit-Nem, and Guru Granth Sahib.

Electronics

In the present age, electronics has become very important for education of the faith, and for its promotion.

Recording facility

Audio and video system to record and play back the Gurdwara programs.

Computer

It is needed for educating children, promoting the faith, and for communication. As well, the Gurdwara records can be maintained on it. It is need of the time.

Projector

To enhance the interest in general, to educate adults and children, and to promote the faith, various projection systems for videos, home films, discs, slides, and documents (papers), are necessary. As well, the talks delivered now, avail of these gadgets. Digital systems have their own significance.

Publishing Literature

It is extremely important for the Gurdwaras to start publishing singly or jointly, very easy literature of the faith in Gurmukhi, English, Hindi, and other languages, to provide all needed literature especially for the children and youth, and to promote the faith. There is great shortage of such literature, and one can hardly afford to purchase it.

Gurdwara - Care of Facilities

Care of facilities in a Gurdwara

Check the Facilities

Before and after a Gurdwara-Session, the persons with the assignments of the facilities, should check these to be sure that everything is working fine – trash-cans are empty, soap is there, toilet rolls are available, paper-towels are in plenty, flush (toilet) is working, water fountain is in order etc.

Paper towels or roll should never be kept on the hand wash basin. Paper gets wet, spoiled and polluted. These should always be put on or in their dispensers.

Trash cans must not touch the walls on the sides, or corners of the room. On opening, its lid hits the wall, or walls and damages it.

Shoes Service Area

Before entering the interior of the Gurdwara – prayer hall or Langar hall etc. leave the shoes outside in the shoe-stand area. This place should be neat and clean with proper shoe-racks, and foot pads.

Foot Cleaning Pool – is in front of the main entrance of the prayer hall, or on a side of it. It should have running water to keep water clean. It should not be slippery. Foot pads should be there on both sides of it.

Particularly the historical Gurdwaras have this foot-washing facility, and none can enter the prayer hall without washing the feet. The feet have to be properly washed and not just a token dip should be given to them or to the toes. Washing the feet is not a ceremony or tradition, but is to maintain cleanliness. Even the clean looking feet may be sweaty and smelly. At such places, no one can enter the prayer hall with socks on. Under some very important and special circumstances, permission to wear new pair of socks after washing the feet might be given by the management.

Many people out of their deep devotion, and others to seek cure from an ailment, reverently pray and sip this water (in which the Sangat washes its feet). Healthy or nor, they receive blessings due to their deep faith.

Hand-wash Basin

This should be well maintained. If the hands are not clean, wash them with soap and water.

Scarves

Head should be covered before entering the prayer hall. Clean scarves are kept in plenty close to the shoes-off area, or the main entrance.. These scarves are put back into a separate container before leaving the Gurdwara building - prayer hall or Langar hall. These are washed every time after use.

Handicap Area

Facilities for handicapped persons are needed. Gurdwara should arrange these. Place for handicapped to sit down should be ideally located – close to the stage, keeping in the mind respect to Guru Granth Sahib. They should not feel ignored or neglected. It is important to realize that the old people, besides other handicaps, might also be deficient in many ways – loss of hearing, poor vision etc.

Sound System

If anyone desires to get the volume of loudspeakers adjusted, rather than fumbling, he or she should approach the proper operator. The loudspeakers should be evenly distributed throughout the hall. These should preferably have individual volume controls. The volume

of loudspeakers should be ideal for everyone, including those sitting far away at the rear (main entrance). If the loudspeakers are fixed close to the stage, the volume should be assessed from the far end of the Sangat close to the main entrance (far away from the stage). Keep in the mind that the people with hearing problems might be there. Keep in the mind the general need and not the individual choice. If needed to benefit the deaf, handicap area should have its own loud speakers with individual controls.

Lighting

Besides usual bright lights, the prayer hall needs a control to get a mild, subtle, and cool dim light equally spread throughout the prayer hall. The dim light helps concentration in the Naam-Jaap (Recitation of the Name of God), meditation, and in listening to Kirtan.

If the fans are also there in the air-conditioned building, these should be evenly and effectively distributed, and should be at a reasonable height.

Drinking Water (Fountain)

It should be working properly. Supply disposable glasses for those who cannot drink directly from the fountain.

Restroom

A Gurdwara has the facility of restroom and shower. Nobody should ever go to washroom, restroom – bathroom, with naked feet. This will soil the feet and spoil carpet in the hall – it will become dirty and get polluted: environment in the hall will deteriorate. A few pairs of slippers of different sizes should be kept there.

Must Wash Hands - After using restroom (bathroom), one must wash hands with soap and water to prevent spreading infection.

Anyone with infection

Anyone with infectious disease e.g. flue, mumps measles, whooping cough etc. should better stay at home till recovery.

Fire Extinguishers, and Alarms

Fire extinguishers, fire alarms, carbon-monoxide (cooking gas) alarms, Burglar alarms, are a must on the premises. Prayer-hall stage, and Kitchen should be equipped with these. They have to be checked and batteries changed occasionally.

Gurdwara Noise Control

Separate glass screened area for the devotees with small children, will protect the congregation from the noise and disturbance by the minors.

Water Sources

At the time of Gurus, sources of clean and pure water were limited to water tanks and wells. Those constructed by the Gurus were mostly attached to Gurdwaras. These were very well maintained and kept clean as a selfless and devoted service by their followers. These were gifts of the Gurus, and were considered holy.

Sarovars

Pools or Water Tanks

Mostly the historical Gurdwaras e.g. Nankana Sahib (Now, in Pakistan), have a big water tank attached to them. Gurdwara Sahib at Taran Taran is on the bank of a very big tank. Gurdwara at Mukatsar has a real big tank. Harimandir Sahib – Golden Temple, Amritsar, is set in the big pool. Gurdwara Dookh Nivaaran Sahib, Patiala, is besides a tank. Gurdwara Sahib at Hemkunt, built in the very recent past is on the bank of about one square mile icy cold, shimmering lake, at the height of 15,200 ft. Gurdwara Panja Sahib at Hasan Abdal, now in Pakistan, has an adjoining comparatively small tank fed by the fresh spring water.

Many such tanks have specific places to reverently drink the holy water from them with a prayer for physical health, spiritual evolution and well-being of the family. These tanks are used for bathing, and are kept very clean. For this purpose, plenty of fish is kept in them. Wide and big steps of the tanks have iron chains to hold on, and the steps are kept scrubbed - non-slippery. On certain days, huge number of the people visit these Gurdwaras to have the holy dip.

Every now and then, the Sangat joins in to clean these holy pools. These are real great occasions of selfless service. Even the saints, Rajas, Sardars, and leaders, feel honored to participate.

Bauli

A Bauli is a well with steps to reach the water. Gurdwara Sahib at Goindwal has 84 steps. Gurdwara Chuna Mandi, Lahore has a Bauli (Now, it is in Pakistan). Gurdwara Sahib of Guru Nanak Dev, at Jagan Nath Puri in Orissa, has a Bauli. The people drink it as the holy water, and bathe in it hoping to get emancipated. It is not the question of what the Sikh faith says about it. It is the faith of a devotee.

Wells

Some Gurdwaras have water wells with them. Gurdwara Sahib at Chheharta, in Amritsar, has a very big well. It has six wheels with chains of buckets to draw water. Gurdwara at Patna Sahib has a well in the Gurdwara building itself. Gurdwara Bhai Joga Singh at Peshawar,

now in Pakistan, has a well with milky sulfur water. The people bathe with this water for health. It tasted bitter.

The Sikh Gurus made tanks, Baulis and wells as the sources of fresh drinking water to the public, and for taking bath etc. These also, supplied drinking water for animals. Used, and surplus water was directed to the nearby fields. Some Gurdwaras, in their complexes or close to them, provide fresh drinking water-pools for animals. Bathing

Bathing

Bathing in the holy pools, appeases the mind by virtue of the firm faith and it also gives peace. One may take such a bath anywhere, any number of times, but sins go away only by purifying the mind by Gurbani and Naam-Jaap, to become a good and ethical person. We have to take care that we do not hurt or perturb the faith of anyone by any means.

GURDWARA - DISCIPLINE

Organization, Management, Sangat

Trustees - Responsibilities

It is duty of the management to take care of and watch that the discipline in the Gurdwara is maintained according to the set ethics. For applying and watching these effectively, at least some trustees should attend all the Gurdwara proceedings. One or the other trustee should be there throughout the program, and participate actively.

The trustees and management, individually or as the group, is responsible and answerable to the Sangat or to its individual members. The members of management should have enough time to devote to their assigned –duties.

It is a general feeling that the Sangat or its members enjoy the liberty of questioning the management, its members, or any one else responsible for the working of Gurdwara.

Anyone, who is performing there (in the Gurdwara) i.e. Kirtanya (devotional singer), Kathakar (preacher, sermon giver), or a speaker etc. can be questioned with permission of the management. Such things should be after the worship proceedings are over, may be in the presence of Guru Granth Sahib, open or closed.

The questioner should get the permission to speak, if the cause is genuine and right. Every thing should be in humility, observing discipline, politeness, sweetness, and there should preferably be no insistence to reply, or any argument.

Decisions for observing formalities are local and mutual. The Sangat or its members have the right to be kept satisfied with the working of Gurdwara.

Sangat Involvement

The management should try to involve the maximum number of Sangat – members of congregation, and share their minor as well as major responsibilities with them. This will reduce burden of the trustees, Sangat will take the Gurdwara as its own, and the members will develop eagerness to participate and regularly attend it.

The approach should be of humility, understanding, tolerance, accommodating others, compassion, and of politeness, to win the confidence, respect, and commitment of the Sangat. This will also promote mutual respect in the members, and dedication to Gurdwara.

Youth Involvement

It is very important to involve the youth. This is the only way to create in them an eagerness for the faith, and love for Gurdwara. Sangat should be responsible for inculcating in them the pride of faith to save them from going astray. This can be effectively achieved by teaching them history of the faith (Sikh history), Scriptures, and by their actively participating in the activities of the Gurdwara and community. Of course, they need role models to imbibe the reality. It is essential that we join in to make it our priority to teach faith, and provide its canopy (protection) to our children. Only this can save us, and them.

Senior's - Involvement

It is in no way less important to involve the elderly members. At least some of them might be somewhat aware of at least a few aspects of the discipline and procedures practiced in the faith. They may be able to provide some useful guidance.

Sangat - Responsibility

Guru Granth Sahib is the living Guru – the Word, that is immortal. The principal responsibility of the whole Sangat is to maintain the serene, calm, respectful, devotional, and holy atmosphere in the Gurdwara.

In the Gurdwara, everyone has to be clean, properly groomed and dressed. The body should be covered ideally. One should be humble, polite, sweet, and mentally in communion with Gurbani. The mind should be above negative traits, malice, and animosity – elevated and pure state of mind. One should go to the Gurdwara with full surrender to the Guru and God. We have to humbly beg the Lord for His mercy, spiritual enhancement, and to evolve in an effort to become an ethical entity.

Gurdwara is a Chatsal, School

Chatsal is a school, to learn the Sikh discipline, and Gurmukh-Jiwan – spiritually (God) oriented life. As well, this is a place to learn recitation and correct phonation of Gurbani (Scriptures), Sikh history, and basics of the Sikh way of life. If not in a Gurdwara, then where to learn all this?

We should try our best to learn correct recitation of the Scriptures. The people, without realizing or caring for their incorrect phonation, sit down even for an Akhand-Paath – continuous recitation of Guru Granth Sahib. The Gurbani recitation should be correct. It is great that someone reads the Holy Book, may be incorrectly, but this is justified

for the learning stage only, and not for ever. One should aim at learning its correct recitation.

The corrections are usually made by a monitor, and mostly when one is reciting the Scripture. This is the practical and standard method. Afterwards, nobody has time to attend to such things, and as well it becomes much less effective. A correction made at the spot goes home well. This method should be fine in a limited, casual gathering, more particularly set for this purpose, and is not for a formal, regular Gurdwara session, or a function. The local Sangat can decide on the method to be adopted.

Maintenance of Records

Maintain the records of Gurdwara. Attention has to be paid to the property-documents, construction-records, different types of contracts, maintenance-records, stock-registers, accounts, and contributions. It is important to keep detailed records of the employees.

Minutes of the meetings of management, its sub-groups, and its committees should be recorded. It is a useful idea to keep the summary of talks, and information about the speakers. Diary of Gurdwara sessions may be maintained.

It is meaningful to keep records of marriages, and all other ceremonies performed in the Gurdwara. Marriage certificates should be issued, preferably to both of the bride and bridegroom.

Facilities for Children

If possible, arrangements for indoor and outdoor games, and training for hobbies should be made. Lessons in self-defense (Gatka - fencing), first-aid, etc. are useful. The Sikh art gallery, the Sikh museum etc. are good visual aids for learning. Such things will create love for Gurdwara.

Appreciation

Introduction and appreciation of the visitors, guest-speakers, Ragis (devotional singers) and Kathakars (preachers) create love for the Gurdwara and Sangat (the people there). It is rewarding to appreciate those who render dedicated selfless Sewa (voluntary service) of any type, to Gurdwara or Sangat.

PRAYER HALL DISCIPLINE

Gurdwara is the place for the people to pray to God in the set Sikh way, in the presence of Guru Granth Sahib – the Sikh Holy book. A visitor e.g. from outside the Sikh community, can calmly watch and enjoy the proceedings.

Discipline is important to maintain the similarity of proceedings in all Gurdwaras. This has been laid down in the Reht (Code of Ethics) for the faith by the Sikh-Panth – the Sikh world. It is available in the form of a booklet from the bookstores or from S.G.P.C. (Shromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, Amritsar), an Institution for controlling Gurdwaras.

Different Gurdwaras may have slight variations according to their individual needs and limitations. The Gurdwaras of different sects, especially not under the control of S.G.P.C., may have their own modifications in the routines. At homes, the people may have some of their own choices.

The sameness in the functioning of Gurdwaras, encourages brotherhood and unity. A Gurdwara starts its program in the morning with recitation of Gurbani and singing of the Holy Hymns. In the overseas countries, changes and adjustments may have to be made according to the arrangements possible and facilities available. The local laws have to be taken care of.

Following is the discipline for entering the prayer hall.

Prayer Hall - Entering

Following is the discipline for going to the presence of Guru Granth Sahib and Sangat (congregation), in the prayer hall -

- * Children may be left in the nursery if this facility is available. Older children may go to the children's class, if Gurmatt School – school for teaching the Sikh faith, is held.

- * Go to the Gurdwara with neat, tidy self, and clean clothes. The clothes should cover the body properly, nicely, and should impart soberness. They should not be showy or gaudy. High, brief, or tight clothes do not seem suitable for going to the Sangat - congregation. Avoid putting on too much makeup and too many ornaments. Piercing the nose, ear lobes, and other body parts is not approved in the Sikh world.

- * Do not carry any drugs, alcohol or tobacco in its any form. Do not go to a Gurdwara after taking alcohol, tobacco, or any other drug (Under intoxication and smelling bad).

- * The head should be covered.

* Leave your shoes out. If need be clean your feet. Usually, there is a small ditch (tank) mostly with the running water to clean the feet before entering the prayer hall particularly that of an historical Gurdwara. Unless there is water tank to wash the feet, the freshly worn socks are mostly not removed in the usual Gurdwaras.

* Beepers, phones, and such distracting devices should be off. When entering the hall, remove headphones, and no playing of cassettes, digital or other CDs, or any other voice (music)-storing device. No disturbance to the gathering.

* Walk to Guru Granth Sahib with folded hands, humility, serenity and calmly. As far as possible, make some offering in coin or kind to Guru Granth Sahib, bow to it, and sit down anywhere you like. An offering is made with a free will. Sit facing Guru Granth Sahib, whether it is open or closed. If the Holy Book is not there, face the person who is leading the proceedings. Do not sit turning your back, or directing your feet in that direction.

* Sikhs bow to the Holy Book coming down on both knees and touching floor with forehead – not that only one knee touches the floor. Of course, there is no strict discipline for it. A handicapped person may not be able to bend, or go down on his or her knees.

* There is no restriction, but mostly, the women and men occupy two different sides of the hall. Ideally located low chairs or other seats may be provided for the handicapped. Those with good health should avoid to use this facility unless essential due to some valid reason.

* Traditionally, everyone sits at the same level on the floor to express equality. None is provided with or tries to find a special seat. Personal, incapacitating health problem is a different story.

* After bowing to Guru Granth Sahib, or later, a devotee may offer with his free will, some cash to Ragi – the devotional singer, or Kathakar - preacher, but not to a usual speaker from Sangat. After making the offer gently, do not touch the stage before them as a gesture of bowing to them.

* Nobody should ever bow to the floor or touch the feet of anyone in the presence of Guru Granth Sahib. Slightly bowing or a nod of head with folded hands, may be with a little smile to show respect, should be enough. No talking.

* Pay full attention to recitation of the Scriptures, divine music, and other proceedings in the prayer hall.

* Do not talk to your neighbors. If essential, do it so that you do not disturb the others. You may go out for any long talk. Better give a written message.

* You cannot disturb proceedings in a formal gathering – no questions, and no discussions. You may question a speaker if the

questions are invited. With permission of the stage secretary, you may politely ask questions, after the end of that proceeding. Otherwise, you can talk to him or her later at the personal level.

* Listen to Kirtan silently. You may accompany him or her, in your own heart and do not disturb others. Quite often, singing by Sangat is invited and encouraged by the leading singer.

* Control your children. Do not allow them to run amuck, jump, dance, shout or cry. Keep them calm. If needed, take the child out of the hall, till he or she calms down. It is your responsibility to maintain the sanctity of the hall. If there is a provision, take the child to the separate enclosure, children's center, or to the Gurdwara-school.

* While sitting in the presence of Guru Granth Sahib, nobody stands up to honor someone who enters the hall, however great he or she may be. Standing up like that, will amount to insult the Holy Book. If need be, a Sewak (an attendant – the person serving there) may approach such a person and conduct him to a proper place to sit. When a distinguished person enters the hall, some may shout Jaikaras (slogans) without getting up. This too, should not be done, encouraged, or appreciated. The proceedings should continue undisturbed.

* Nobody claps hands, makes inappropriate gestures, abnormal and unnecessary movements, or dances in the presence of the Holy Book.

* A slogan should be shouted only at a reasonable, proper, and justified occasion, and not otherwise. Try utmost not to disturb the Sangat.

* Many people think that it is insulting to the Holy Book if the flower-petals are showered over anyone else except the Holy Granth (Book). Some do so carefully e.g. in a marriage ceremony, so that the petals thrown over someone do not cross over or fall on Guru Granth Sahib.

PRAYER HALL ROUTINES

Doing some thing purposeful, even without knowing it, is not a ritual.

Doing some thing purposeless is a ritual.

We maintain our life and health by continuously doing numerous things. We do not know much about them. We only know that these are essential. These are not rituals. We drink water daily many times, and take food two to three times every day, without knowing much scientific about water and food, but know that these we need to live. These are not rituals. We take bath every day without any scientific knowledge of its physiology, but know it is needed for good health. Taking bath every day is not a ritual.

We may recite Gurbani, and do Naam-Jaap every day, without knowing much about them, but we know and have a faith that merely doing these lead us to yarn for an elevated life. These do good. These are not rituals. Knowing about Gurbani and Naam-Jaap, will boost the faith hundred times and will make them much more effective. We know, this too.

It is not a ritual if we do something producing good results, although we do not know much about it. Ritual is something that we keep on doing without any purpose – nothing good coming out of that.

Doing Paath, may be as a routine, and doing Naam-Jaap, even without understanding it, produces wonderful results. Lives of the saints very strongly support it. For such results, faith is needed and not any knowledge. Just ask those who do such things.

We do nothing, but keep criticizing without doing and knowing any thing. We have no right to hurt anyone's faith and damage the path of spirituality. There is no doubt, knowing and understanding such things (Gurbani, Naam-Jaap) is imperative, because these create awareness with greater ease and in a shorter time. We should not forget that effectiveness of routines of a faith have been repeatedly tested by the saints and seers, and there is no doubt that such things produce effect and are not mere rituals.

Do such practices seriously, sincerely, with unconditioned devotion to develop unwavering faith (may be a blind faith), and yourself experience the outcome. You shall be amazed, and there will be no reason for you to repent. Keep in the company of practicing God oriented, saintly people to learn and gain some thing of the spiritual excursions .

Note

In the Chapters on routines and procedures in the Prayer hall, and Langar Hall, some of the same headings have been repeated by giving them again wherever these were needed. It was an effort to make them available at the spot to keep everything simple, easily understandable, and convenient to follow.

Prayer Discipline

According to Reht Maryada printed by S.G.P.C., 1998, page 15, only one thing should be done at one time: Kirtan – holy singing, Katha - preaching, or Gurbani recitation. At one and the same time two different things cannot be carried out i.e. if Akhand Paath is being recited, at the same time there should not be another Akhand paath beside it (unless there is a partition between the two); no loud reading of Panj Granthi or Jappu ji Sahib; no Kirtan, Katha, speech or announcements etc.

It is not in good taste to interrupt Kirtan etc. and make announcements may be to appeal for collections for however good a cause. Routine at Harimandir Sahib is to do pure Kirtan with no Katha (sermons, preaching) in it. This is the set precedence of that holy place, and there, Kirtan is not mixed with any thing else (meanings, explanations, commentaries etc.).

Daily programs in a Gurdwara are usually set and standard with some local variations for the place, and may have the additional routines at different days. Gurdwara may be held daily, or on specific days, mostly on Sundays. The following are the usual routines carried out in a Gurdwara.

Essential Daily Routines

1. Recitation of Gurbani – Scriptures

Gurbani is recited everyday. It makes no sense to play the pre-recorded Bani, or Kirtan, to replace a routine in the Gurdwaras, or even at homes. A cassette may be played just to fill up some free time. In some Gurdwaras, the programs are relayed on television to some other room. For the benefit of the people, extension of loudspeaker is set up in the Langar hall.

Now (presently), in a Gurdwara, the following Banis (Scriptures) are recited daily –

Nit Nem

The following Scriptures are recited -

In the morning –

Jappu ji Sahib

Jaap Sahib

Swa-ee-ae Patshahee Dasveen “Sravag sudh smooch sidhaan kae. “

In the Evening

Rahras – Sodar Dee Chaukee

Night – at Bed Time

Sohela (Kirtan Sohela). In a Gurdwara, it is recited along with closing the Guru Granth.

Also, See Nit Nem, on page given in index.

2. Asa Dee Vaar

This is very important daily routine (a must) in a Gurdwara.

Every morning, there is singing of complete Asa Dee Vaar. Sometimes, under urgent circumstances, someone may do it in parts and complete it in more than one days.

3. Kirtan

Devotional singing. Shabad-Kirtan (singing of the Hymns) is not a must for a Gurdwara, as there, Kirtan of Asa Dee Vaar with Shabads, is already done as a routine.

At Harimandir Sahib, Amritsar, After Asa Dee Vaar early in the morning, Kirtan continues day and night with a break from about 10 PM., to 2 AM.

For Kirtan, see pages given in Index.

4. Ardas

Invocation - This is the prayer said at the end of the Gurdwara session.

We pray to God, through our Guru and Guru Granth Sahib - i.e. the Word of the Gurus. Ardas is done with humility, attentively and concentration.

* Everyone has to get up for Ardas, stand calmly with folded hands.

* Keep your face towards Guru Granth Sahib or its seat (where it is kept and opened in the hall). Outside, where the Holy Book is not present, the face should be towards Ardasia (one who leads supplication).

* All those attending Ardas, should stand calmly without talking. Even if someone is holding a child in her or his arms, it is a must to stand without moving, and if it is not possible, he or she should go out of the hall and attend to Ardas from outside.

* If you want to say Ardas with Ardasia, do so only in your heart. Do not speak it out and disturb others.

* Listen to Ardas attentively, and follow Ardasia when he or she says “Waheguru,” and slogan at the end “Jo bole so nihaal, Satsri-Akaal.” – Blessed is the one who utters God is great!

* Bow down when Ardasia bows down, follow him to stand up and to sit down.

* Nobody should place money into the hands of Ardasia while he or she is doing Ardas.

* If there is any urgent instruction, preferably give it as a note neatly written in block letters.

Also, see Ardas, on pages given in index.

5. Hukam

Edict of the Guru: an inspiration for the day.

Hukam, or Vaak – Order, edict or the Word of Guru. The person in Tabeaa – in attendance, sitting behind the Holy Book, will read out Hukam – Order of the Guru. This is recitation of a Hymn at random, usually from about the middle portion of Guru Granth Sahib. When Hukam is read out -

* Maintain an absolute silence and no talking, as well as no other activity.

* Keep your children under perfect control.

* None else will speak out the Hukam, but will listen to it with attention.

* All others should listen to it silently, reverently, with folded hands and humility. This is Hukam and we should listen to what the Guru says, and try to adopt it practically.

Also, see Hukam, on pages given in index.

6. Parshad

Karrah-Parshad - Sanctified Pudding

Parshad – Distribution Steps

Hukam is taken after Ardas

Kirpan Bhaet of Parshad is done after Hukam

Parshad is Distributed after Kirpan Bhaet

Parshad – Discipline

* Parshad is a blessed gift from the Guru - Waheguru, and even a small quantity of it should suffice. It is not for filling the tummy.

* Parshad is taken in both hands cupped together, and not on a single hand. If the hands are not clean, better wash them with soap and

water, or for the time being it may be taken on a napkin placed on the cupped hands.

* Keep sitting calmly to get Parshad in your turn. If you have been missed, you may request for it.

Anyone receiving Parshad should be watchful and if even a fraction of it falls on the floor, he or she should promptly pick it up and respectfully put aside so that it does not get trampled under the feet, or it be put in the napkin for disposal. It will maintain respect of Parshad and as well, protect carpet.

For all these, see pages in index.

1. Katha

Katha – preaching, mostly of the historical episodes, or of Gurbani. It is additional program in a Gurdwara, but is very common and popular. Katha may be a daily routine at some places, and is usually undertaken in the afternoon. Most of the Ragis, commonly combine Kirtan with some Katha.

It has its great importance in disseminating the Sikh history, so essential to make Sikhs aware of their past and to make them proud of the dignity of their precious heritage.

See pages in index.

2. Dhadi Vaars

Vaar – a ballad. Dhadi – a bard

This singing in a Gurdwara is not a regular feature. A Vaar is an episode from the Sikh history. Bards narrate these in poetry and use traditional instruments Dhad and Sarangi. The Vaar singing has its great value in raising morale and valor.

Dhad is a small, hand-held double-drum narrow at its middle. It is held in one hand and played with the other.

Sarangi is a stringed instrument, held against the left of chest and played with a bow.

Guru Hargobind introduced Dhadi Vaars to his Darbar – court.

3. Speeches

It is not a regular feature but is common. Only the non-political talks by the scholars and others may be allowed. Politics is not a right thing in the Gurdwara where audience is almost always mixed. The people of the other faiths will be discouraged to come to the Gurdwara if something not acceptable is said. A neutral environment should always be maintained, and politics can be discussed anywhere else.

See pages in index.

Gurdwara - Occasional Programs

Occasionally, any other faith oriented programs may be organized.

Amrit

Where possible, a Gurdwara may organize an Amrit ceremony. This needs five practicing Amritdhari Sikhs to prepare Amrit and to give it to those eager to have it.

Amrit – It is the holy drink prepared by five Amritdhari Sikhs, by stirring Khanda (double edged iron sword) in the watery syrup put in the iron bowl. While stirring it, the five prescribed Banis (Scriptures) are recited in turn, one by the each Amritdhari Sikh.

Amritdhari

Those who have themselves taken (drank) Amrit and practice the faith observing the edicts of Amrit to lead an ethical life.

Practicing Sikhs

Those Sikhs who observe edicts of Amrit. The tidings of taking Amrit are – living an ethical life, recitation of specified Scriptures, and observing other guidelines to live an elevated life.

Gurdwara - Celebrations

Following are the special days Celebrated in Gurdwaras.

Gurpurb

Holy days of the Gurus – A special program is held on a day related to the Guru, or his family (son), or Guru Granth Sahib. For example –

Birthday of Guru Nanak, and Other Gurus

Birthday of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh, are celebrated world over. Birthday of Guru Ramdas is observed at Amritsar, Punjab, India .

Marriage of Guru Nanak

Celebrated at Batala, District Gurdaspur, Punjab.

Cholae Daa Mela

Observed at Dera Baba Nanak, District Gurdaspur, Punjab. On this day, shirt and handkerchief of Guru Nanak Dev are displayed.

Martyrdom day of Guru Arjun Dev, Guru Tegh Bahadur

Martyrdom days of Guru Arjun and Guru Tegh Bahadur are celebrated all over the world. Guru Arjun Dev was martyred at Lahore (now in Pakistan), and Guru Tegh Bahadur at Delhi, India .

Martyrdom of Sahibzadae

Martyrdom of two Chhotae Sahibzadae (younger sons) of Guru Gobind Singh is celebrated at Sirhind, Punjab.

Martyrdom of Chaalee Muktae

Martyrdom of Chaalee Muktae (forty emancipated ones) is held on 1st day of Magh (month of Bikrami year), at Gurdwara Sahib, Mukatsar, Punjab. Magh coincides with January-February. This fair is called Maghi Daa Mela – the Magi Festival. Maghi falls on the first day of the month Magh. The devotees visit Gurdwara Sahib and take bath in its holy tank.

Asthapna Divas

The day when the Holy Granth (Its first version by Guru Arjun Dev, not yet declared Guru Granth Sahib) was installed at Harimandir Sahib. This is celebrated at Amritsar, Punjab. The first i.e. the original version of the Holy Granth was compiled by Guru Arjun Dev and scribed by Bhai Gurdas.

Gur Gaddi Divas

The day when Guru Gobind Singh declared the second version of Granth Sahib, a Guru: the Word Guru. The second version of Granth Sahib was recompiled by Guru Gobind Singh. This day is celebrated at Hazoor Sahib.

Gradually, Asthapna Divas and Guru Gaddi Divas have achieved the world fame for their celebration.

Khalsa Asthapna Divas

The day of creation of Khalsa. This celebration falls on the Baisakhi Day, 13/14 of April. On this day, the Tenth Master Guru Gobind Singh created Khalsa by preparing and administering Amrit – the holy drink, to his devotees. It is especially celebrated at Gurdwara “Kaes Garh Sahib” at Anandpur Sahib, Punjab.

Baisakhi

This festival is celebrated in every Gurdwara as “Sangrand” i.e. the 1st day of Bikrami month of Baisakh. Celebrating Baisakhi and “Khalsa Asthapna Divas” is one and the same thing as the day is the same.

Baisakhi is an Indian festival in general, and it is to celebrate the harvest season.

Hazoor Sahib

The following days related to Guru Gobind Singh are celebrated at Hazoor Sahib (Abchal Nagar Hazoor Sahib) at Nanded in Maharashtra, India –

- * Hola Mohalla
- * Jyoti jote of Guru Gobind Singh – death day of the Tenth Master.
- * Gur Gaddi Divas of Guru Granth Sahib – the day of installing Granth Sahib as “Guru Granth Sahib.”

Festivals

Festivals and Other days Celebrated in Gurdwaras

Diwali

Festival of Lights. It is an Indian seasonal festival ushering in winter. At night, lamps are lighted on parapets of the houses. In general, its importance is that Avtar Sri Ram Chandar returned home from his exile on this day.

Importance in Sikhs - It is important day for Sikhs as Guru Hargobind returned from Gwalior to Amritsar on Diwali day. This is celebrated with great fanfare and fireworks at Harimandir Sahib, Amritsar.

Hola Mohalla

It is held at Anandpur Sahib, District Ropar, Punjab, one day after the festival of Holi.

Holi is a seasonal festival of India at the onset of spring, indicating end of the winter.

Sikhs replaced Holi with Hola Mohalla. Sikhs celebrate it at Anandpur Sahib, On this day, they display their valor and deftness in using weapons.

Rakhi - Rakharri

Rakhi Festival on full moon day. Rakhi or Rakhrri is a wrist-band. Sister ties a band on the wrist of her brother reminding his protection to her. It is celebrated at the Gurdwara Sahib of Guru Tegh Bahadur at Baba-Bakala; Chheharta Sahib (Guru Hargobind); and Goindwal Sahib (Guru Amardas).

Sangrant (Sangrand)

On the 1st day of Sangrant, complete Baramaha (by 5th Guru Arjun Dev) is read out from Guru Granth Sahib (page 133), in every Gurdwara. At homes, if Guru Granth Sahib is not there, it is devotedly read out of Gutkas – mini prayer books.

Chaudass (Chaudaen)

This is a famous festival held at Gurdwara Sahib at Taran Taran (5th Guru Arjun Dev). It is called “Chaudaen” or “Chaudaen Daa Ishnaan.” (the bath of dark night - 14th day of the waning moon). It is the totally dark night. The devotees take bath at the night time, in the

holy tank of Gurdwara Sahib. It attracts a huge rush. The villagers bring their animals also, for bathing them at this holy tank. The next morning, the people go to Amritsar for “Massiaa” or “Massiaa Daa Ishnan” (bath of the past dark night).

Massiaa

Massiaa is the moon-less (dark) night. This festival is held on the next morning of the fully dark night (the day next to Chaudass) at Harimandir Sahib (Golden Temple), Amritsar. It creates a great rush. The people take bath at this holy tank, too, after bathing at Tarn Taran.

Local Days

Some Gurdwaras, even historical, celebrate their own, local or individual, special days.

Socializing

Do not socialize in the prayer hall, even if the service has ended and Guru Granth Sahib is closed. Sikhs meet by saying “Sat Sir Akal” – the Lord is the truth!, or by saying, “Waheguru ji kaa Khalsa, Waheguru ji kee fateh” - Khalsa belongs to God and glory to Him.

In Gurdwara premises, a very frank and too much informal meeting without a restraint is not appreciated. We have to be considerate of sanctity of the place, and supremacy of the environment. The prime need is of maintaining proper decorum – politeness, humility and sweetness.

PRAYER HALL PROCEDURES

Procedures in prayer hall

The Holy Presence

In the prayer hall, Guru Granth Sahib - the Holy Book, is kept open on the raised platform for the Gurdwara-Session. Unless someone is reading out of it, the Holy Book is covered with nice, clean, cloth sheets. It is better to close the Holy Book and put it back to its resting place if no one will read it throughout the day, or in the evening.

The following procedures in the prayer hall are everyday routine.

Gurdwara Morning Routine

Parkash

Parkash - opening the Holy Book

Bringing the Granth to the Prayer Hall.

In the morning, Guru Granth Sahib is brought to the prayer hall carried on the head from its room, singing Shabads – Holy Hymns, or Waheguru-Sattenaamu etc.

Before carrying the Granth on the head to bring it out, the short Invocation (Chhotee Ardas) is said, standing before Guru Granth Sahib in the room where it is resting,

In the invocation, permission of the Guru is beseeched for permission to take it out and open it.

It should be kept in the mind that someone should work Chaur (hair-wisp) over the Holy Book when carrying it out of the room (or taking it back into it), at any time.

The Granth – Holy Book, is placed on the Peerrha Sahib – cot, a low small bed. This cot is also called Peerrhee or Manji Sahib.

Ardas - Short. Invocation Short

While moving Chauri, singing or saying appropriate Holy Hymns, the Holy Book is gracefully, and reverently unwrapped, and randomly opened at about its middle.

A Palak – cloth-sheet, is placed on each side (left and right) of the Holy Book.

Setting of Guru Granth Sahib is checked, needed adjustments are made, and it is covered with Romalas - cloth sheets, or scarves.

Romalas should be spread out smooth, with their margins properly level, and sides equal on both sides. To learn, watch someone doing it.

Hukam or Vaak of Guru Granth Sahib

Hukam is the Guru's order i.e. inspiration for the day. According to the set procedure, Hukam is read (Holy Hymn is read) from top of the left page where it has been opened (right of the Granth. Even page number), from its start – may be it starts on the back of this page (previous page). This is standard procedure, but its variations can be there. Shabad, mostly starts at the lowest part of the previous page (odd page number), or at the top of the left page that has been opened.

Hukam-Namah

Hukam, is commonly called a “Hukam-Namah,” but literally Hukam-Namah means a written order. In fact, it is a “Hukam,” wherein it is just read and spoken out.

Hukam - Page

In a Gurdwara, for the others to read or listen to this first Hukam of the day, the Holy Book is kept open at this page where the Hukam starts, and covered with sheets.

At the homes, this page may be covered with a few pages from your right (left of the Book), and anyone may take a new (fresh) personal Hukam at any time.

Hukam should not be taken during some other procedure at that place. For example, if Kirtan is going on, one should wait and Hukam should preferably not be taken at that very time.

Also see Hukam on Pages given in index.

Darshan - Beholding the Guru

Picking up cover of the Holy Book and merely looking at the page is not a ‘Darshan’ – seeing it. Real Darshan is reading out of it, or listening to the Holy Hymn out of it.

Service to the Guru

Taking this as a service to the Guru, the frame of a door and legs of the palanquin etc. should not be pressed like pressing the limbs of someone. The real service is reading the Holy Book.

1. Nit-Nem

Routine recitation of the set Scriptures. It is an important and fixed every day routine in the Gurdwara or at home to recite complete Nit-Nem fixed by the Panth. It includes –

For the morning time

Jappu ji Sahib, Jaap Sahib, Savayae Pateshahi Dassveen –
“Srivag sudh smoooh sidhan kae”

For the evening

Rahras - It is recited in the evening at the time of or soon after the sunset. All join in the recitation. It is called "Sodar Dee Chaukee." Chaukee is a set time for reciting some scripture.

Rahras starts with "Raag Asaa Mehalaa Pehla Sodar."

In Sodar Dee Chaukee, the starting part of Rahras is rendered as Kirtan (in music) up to the end of "Sodar Tera kehaa so ghar kehaa jit beh sarab smalae" rest of the recitation is done without singing.

See more pages in index.

Bed time

In a Gurdwara, Kirtan Sohela is recited at the time of Sukh-Asan - closing of Guru Granth Sahib: the Holy Book. It may be recited by heart by the one who is closing the Holy Book, or someone else may read it out.

Sohela or Kirtan Sohela. It is recited before going to sleep. At home, Kirtan Sohela is recited at the bedtime, but if Rahras gets late Sohela as well, is done along with it.

Sukhmani Sahib

Essential or not, in almost every Gurdwara, it is recited daily. It may be done in parts to complete it in more than one days. It is mostly not recited in the historical Gurdwaras. They seem not to have enough time for it. It takes about 1.5 to 2 hours to recite it.

Also see Nit Nem on pages given in index.

Asa Dee Vaar

As a set precedence, singing of some other (additional) Shabads is incorporated in the singing of Asa Dee Vaar. Such a mixed singing of Asa Dee Vaar takes about two hours to properly complete it.

Asa Dee Vaar is a pure singing and in it, no sermon-giving (discourses - talks) are permitted. Its singing time is 3 to 6, in the morning, and singing is completed before sunrise.

In most of the small and medium Gurdwaras in the Western countries, Asa Dee Vaar is not possible as it should be done very early in the morning. At other places, it is done very late. Some hold Asa Dee Vaar only on specific days, mostly Sundays.

Kirtan

Devotional Singing. Also, see Kirtan in index.

Kirtan is praise of the Lord by singing the Holy Hymns - Devotional Music or Holy Singing. Usually at the start, middle or end of such a singing, 'Waheguru' (God), or 'Satte-Naamu-Waheguru' (True God) is sung together by the principal (leading) singer and

congregation. The congregation may also participate in singing some Holy Hymns.

Shabads for Kirtan may be selected for a particular occasion. These should be short and easy to understand.

A Ragi sings to God and Sangat, and he should do it with devotion. He should never select the Hymns not suitable to the occasion to avenge his discontentment or anger. For devotional singing, prerequisite is pure heart and mind, and no malice,!

Kirtan is rendered in different styles -

Classical Singing

As far as possible, Kirtan should be rendered in the classical meter (Raag or Raga). In the Holy Book, a specific meter (Raag) might have been prescribed for the certain Hymn.

Regular Singing

Most of the Ragis, render Kirtan in regular i.e. common, free or open strains not bound by the musical measures. They usually devise their own styles and tunes.

It is good to sing some Hymns in the usual style, but others should be rendered in Nirdharat-Raags (Prescribed classical measures).

Kirtan is a popular program, and is performed in most of the overseas Gurdwaras. Harmonium and Tabla – a pair of drums, are the usual instruments for this singing. Occasionally, some other instruments are added, may be the Western. Old style singing is done with Dholki (drum), Chhaanae (bronze discs) and Chimtae (calipers) etc.

In the presence of Guru Granth Sahib, singing only of its Holy Hymns is allowed. The Holy Hymns from Dassam Granth, compositions by Bhai Gurdas, Bhai Nand Lal, and very short references from the old time writings are permitted.

Katha-Kirtan

In Katha-Kirtan, Katha – sermon (preaching), is mixed with singing of Hymns.

A Kirtan or a Katha-Kirtan is usually for one hour.

Hallae Dae Shabad

In this style, the Hymns are sung with gusto and force as a chorus. The Sangat joins in, and their usual instruments are Dholak or Mirdang (double sided drum with both ends narrow), Chimtae (long iron tongs with bronze discs), Chhaanae (bronze plates) and Kharrtaals (wooden blocks with small bronze plates).

Jotiaan Dae Shabad

In this style, two groups keep singing in turn – stanza by stanza (one stanza or couplet by one group, and the next one by the other group). The same stanza may be repeated by both the parties. Mostly, the men and women sing a stanza in turn.

Movie Style Singing

The Holy Hymns should not be rendered on the tunes of the ordinary street and movie songs. By listening to such songs, wrong scenes may spring up in the mind.

Neutral type, and non-political poems related to the Sikh faith and history, may be recited. Gurdwara is a place purely for worship. Political poems should not be permitted. The choice is that of Sangat.

In general, even outside the Gurdwaras, songs composed mimicking Gurbani and rendered like a Kirtan, should not be allowed. The people do not differentiate such singing from a Shabad-Kirtan and think, these ordinary poems are Gurbani (Holy Hymns). Otherwise, songs and poems related to the Sikh faith and history are easily understandable, and their singing like songs has its own value.

Kirtan Darbar

In a Kirtan-Darbar, (sort of concert), many Ragis (devotional singers) participate in Kirtan. This singing may continue for many hours. Usually, it is held in the evening.

Raaen-Sabai Kirtan

Raaen-Sabaaee Kirtan, is singing the Holy Hymns all the night - from the night to the sunrise. It is night-vigil Kirtan. It continues throughout the night, and many Ragis participate. The followers of Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh, frequently hold such night-singing sessions. They do lot of Naam-Jaap in their singing.

Naam-Jaap Kirtan

Some groups, at Gurdwaras or homes, organize Naam Jaap in the Kirtan style – mixing “Waheguru” Jaap with singing of Shabads. At occasions, they add to it Sattenamu or “Sattenamu-Waheguru” Jaap. This is very elevating and has immediate effect to lift the mind. In fact, Kirtan is very rewarding and singing fixes the mind to the Lord, in an instant.

Parbhat Phaeree

This is the morning vigil Kirtan. In it, a group of devotees keeps singing and moving about in the streets, in the early morning hours. Their vigil usually starts at a Gurdwara and ends with refreshments at some house.

Kirtan - Chowkee

A group of devotees sings and circumambulates (goes around) in the Parkarma (walkway) around a Gurdwara. It is usually carried out in a historical Gurdwara e.g. Golden Temple, Amritsar.

This routine of singing, has set times in the day.

Kirtan Smagam

It is a Kirtan program. It may be held anywhere. There is mostly a subject for Kirtan. Well established, professional Ragis come together to display their expertise in Shabad-Kirtan. Classical music is very important for such sessions. Some Deras (establishments of saints) hold such a gathering regularly once an year.

Anand Sahib – Chhota

Short Anand Sahib (The first five and the last i.e. 40th Paurri) is sung at the end of Kirtan. Karrah Parshad must be placed before Guru Granth Sahib before reciting Anand Sahib. At some occasions when Parshad is not there, usually Anand Sahib is replaced with the singing of –

Vadihoon vaddaa apaar Taeraa martabaa..

(Guru Granth-5th Guru-Page 521-Line 16).

Ardas

When singing of Anand Sahib (Chhota Anand Sahib - the first 5 and the last i.e. 40th Paurree) is complete, Sangat stands up for Ardas – invocation (humble beseeching to the Lord).

Before starting Ardas, the following complete Pauree (step) is recited. This singing gives time to everyone to get set for participating in Ardas -

“T.oo Th:aakuru t.um peh Ardaasu”

(Sukhmani-Ashtpadi 4-Pauree 8. Guru Granth-M: 5-Page 268-Line 1)

After the end of a session, full length Ardas, called Panthic Ardas is said.

Also, see Ardas, on pages given in index.

Ardas - Panthic

Complete Ardas approved by the Panth – the Sikh world, is called Panthic Ardas.

After the prayer-session is complete, the full length Panthic Ardas is recited (and not its short version i.e. only starting Paurree of Ardas).

See Ardas, on pages given in index.

Hukam

Hukam – Order of the Guru i.e. his incentive for the day. It is taken according to the instructions – humility, devotion, surrender etc. See

Note

We commonly use the term Hukam-Namah, but in fact it means a written order.

According to Reht Maryada printed by S.G.P.C., reprint 1998 AD., Page 15, direction for Hukam is that in the congregation (Gurdwara or anywhere else), only a Sikh man or woman should be in Tabeaa (attendance) of Guru Granth Sahib. Further, it says that (there) only a Sikh should recite Paath - Gurbani (to Sangat, there). It further says that any other person can take Hukam for his or her own self. It is presumed that in the Gurdwara Sangat a Sikh (Amritdhari?) man or woman should recite Gurbani and take Hukam.

Parshad

Parshad - sanctified pudding

It is distributed to the sangat after Kirpan Bhaet, and Hukam.

See index for more pages on Parshad.

Parshad – Kirpan Bhaet

Passing Kirpan through Karrah Parshad.

Do not pass Kirpan through Parshad immediately after Ardas, but wait and do it after Hukam has been taken. Kirpan Bhaet is to offer it to the Guru. Naturally, it should be done after Hukam.

Parshad becomes sanctified after offering it to the Guru, Hukam, and passing Kirpan through it.

Nothing becomes a Guru's Parshad unless it is offered to the Guru, Ardas is said, and Kirpan is passed through it. Besides eatables, Kirpan is touched to the article offered to the Guru. This is the Sikh way.

At Hazoor Sahib, besides Karrah-Parshad, all other offerings made by the devotees are touched with an all steel arrow after a very short supplication by a Sewadar.

Parshad - Bhog Lao, Parvan Karo

In Ardas, for eatables e.g. Parshad, Langar etc., an Ardasia should not say "Bhog lao jee" – please, eat it, but should request, "Parvaan karo jee" - please, accept it – approve it.

Parshad – Reserve Parshad

To start with, a portion of Parshad is taken out in a bowl, and it is kept aside, usually close to Guru Granth Sahib or under its cot. This

portion is the reserve for emergency and for Bhai ji – anyone in Tabeaa i.e. in attendance to Guru Granth Sahib.

Parshad for Panj Piaarae

After this, the five portions of Parshad for Panj Piaarae (the five beloved of the Guru) are taken out naming each one of them.

These five portions are distributed amongst the five Amritdhari Sikhs, present there in Sangat.

Alternatively, these portions are mixed back into the main Parshad (from which these portions were taken out).

If Amritdharis are less than five, the portions of Parshad is given to them and the rest of it is mixed back into the main Parshad.

If no such Sikhs are there, all portions are mixed back. After this, Parshad is distributed to Sangat, including those who got it first.

The reserve kept aside, may be used by the one who is in Tabeaa, and as well be given to the visitors if the main Parshad is finished.

In Akhand Paath and Sampatt Paath, Parshad is given to the visitors whenever they comes, may be day or night

Panj-Piaarae

Panj-Piaarae – the five beloved of the Guru. These are Amritdharee Sikhs.

It may be helpful if the names of Panj-Piaarae are written, framed and kept handy for reading them out by a novice

Names of Panj Piaarae – five beloved of the Guru –

Daya Singh

Dharam Singh

Himat Singh

Mohkam Singh

Sahib Singh

Parshad Distribution

Discipline of Distributing Parshad

Take care of the following -

* Distribution of the napkins - Hands should be washed with soap and water immediately before distributing napkins. Mostly children eagerly do this job. Someone should monitor them.

* Parshad – It is a boon from the Guru and Waheguru (the Lord). Immediately before touching it for distribution, hands should be nicely washed with soap and water. The nails should be kept properly trimmed.

* The bowl of Parshad should be held on hand and not against body. If needed, one person may hold the bowl and the other distribute it.

* At the time of its distribution, the server should avoid mixing, kneading, pressing or making balls of Parshad. It does not look nice. He or she should take out a portion as it is, and give to the Sangat.

* Generally, Parshad is distributed with naked hands. Take care that the hands are healthy, nails are cut, and no medication has been applied to them. Hands should be free from any disease like eczema.

* There should be sufficient persons for the distribution of Parshad in the sections of men and as well of women. If the Sangat is more, a few should start distributing from the entry-door side i.e. front of the hall (the end away from stage).

* Parshad is distributed in equal quantity to everyone and without any prejudice or preference. All should be considered equal. Proportionately small amount may be given to the children, or to those who ask for a smaller quantity. A child's portion may be given to an elder e.g. mother, or father.

* No talking or saying anything while distributing Parshad. Better, wrap a cloth across the mouth. Even "Waheguru" should be said in the heart (mind), unless the mouth is covered. If it is must, move Parshad away from the mouth. It prevents its pollution, contamination.

* No touching of any body part – not even face or hair, or anything else, when distributing Parshad.

* The Sangat should be reminded in every session (gathering) to pick up Parshad falling on the floor or carpet. Parshad should not get trampled. Sikhs revere Parshad. Also, it saves carpet.

* It is a good idea to cover the carpet with cloth sheets before the Sangat arrives, remove and wash them after the session.

* The Holy Book should not be closed till Parshad is being distributed.

* If Parshad is too hot and time is short, a ladle or spoon may be used to distribute it, and it may be taken on napkins kept on both the hands joined together. Rather than using bare hands, it may be a good idea to distribute it with a spoon. Thin gloves may be desirable. The Gurdwara management can decide such minor things with consent of the Sangat.

Gurdwara - Evening Routine

Sodar Dee Chaukee

Sodar Dee Chaukee – In this, Rahras is recited in a Kirtan-style. After Rahras, Kirtan Sohla is also recited, while closing the Holy Book.

See more pages in index.

Sukhasan

Sukh-Asan – Closing Guru Granth Sahib

Guru Granth Sahib Santokhna - closing Guru Granth Sahib for its rest.

Guru Granth Sahib should be closed after Parshad has been distributed and not before it.

Guru Granth Sahib must be closed, and should not be left open in the day, or overnight, unless someone will read or is reading it e.g. in doing Akhand-Paath.

{May be at any time, when Panthik Ardas has been said, Hukam taken, Guru Granth Sahib covered with sheets, Parshad distributed, and program for the day completed for the day (no more any program including Sodar Dee Chaukee etc.), in Gurdwara or elsewhere, Sukhasan is done.}.

Santokhna – Sukhasan

* For a few times, a few quotes of Gurbani are recited, Chaur is worked over the Holy Granth, and covers are calmly removed.

* Hukam is taken without involving others. For Hukam, a Shabad (Hymn) is recited from the Holy Book from its left top (If a Shabad starts from the previous page, start reading it from there).

Mostly, the same Shabad is recited that was got as Hukam in the morning, but it may not be essential to do so, and a new Hukam may be taken. Some sects may practice a variation about selecting the location of Shabad. This recitation is done in low and soft voice, and the Holy Book is respectfully closed, and wrapped in sheets, while reciting Kirtan Sohela.

Recitation of Kirtan Sohela, is mostly done by the person in Tabeaa (doing this service - one who took Hukam). It may be read out or recited by someone else.

closing the Holy Granth -

* Palkaan - the cloth pieces hanging on two sides (right and left) of the Holy Book, are removed, folded and kept aside.

* If there are extra cloth strips of the short width on front (side of the person doing it) and back (side farther away towards Sangat) of the closed Holy Book, coming from the binding, these are wrapped over the front and back of the closed Book held up (wrapped around the edges of the deck of pages).

* If the binding itself has a flap, it is turned over to cover the top of the Holy Book held upwards on closing (it is not tucked inside its binding).

* The Granth is wrapped in nicely smoothed cloth sheets.

- * Any extra cloth sheets are folded and kept aside.
- * Pillows are usually removed and kept on one side.

Taking Granth to its Room

* The Sangat stands up, Chhotee Ardas - a short prayer (first Pauree – first step of the full Ardas) is said, and a request is made to the Guru to permit taking it to the place of its rest. This Chhotee Ardas is the same as said at the time of opening the Holy Book, and only the supplication at its end is for permission to take it for rest.

See in index for more page on Chhotee Ardas

* After Chhotee Ardas, Sangat keeps standing, the Holy Granth is carried on the head, going around the cot (platform) from the left (anti clockwise). It is done in the form of a small procession, singing together Gurbani (mostly “Jithae jaa-ae bahae maeraa Sat.t.eguru so thaana suhavaa Ram Rajae”- (the place is blessed to which my Lord retires), Guru Granth-M: 4-P 450-L 17), or saying “Waheguru, Satte-Naamu” etc. and working Chaur (moving wisp) over it.

* A few others join in and it makes a small procession walking behind the person carrying Guru Granth Sahib. The Holy Granth is moved to its room for Sukh-Asan – its retiring i.e. resting. Throughout, the Sangat keeps standing and singing. As the Holy Granth passes by the people, they reverently bow to it.

* The holy Book is placed on the cot in the room for retiring. Jaikara, “Jo Bolae so nihaal, Satsri Akaal,” – He is blessed who says God is great, is shouted. After bowing to Guru Granth Sahib, Sangat comes out of the room, and door is closed.

If the Langar is arranged, everyone moves to the Langar hall to take snacks or food, whatever is served.

The Place for Rest

After Gurdwara session, the Holy Book should be removed to the separate room used only for its resting, and it is placed on a dignified. The room should be clean, and well ventilated. It should be specially for this purpose, and for nothing else. No other thing should be kept in this room. The bed should have a canopy above it. A night-light should be left on.

In a Gurdwara, the Holy Granth should not be left on the cot, or in Palki – palanquin, and must be taken away to the room for its rest.

The Sikh homes usually have a separate prayer room. At homes, usually a nice closet or bookshelf is used for resting the Holy Book. May be, it is left on the cot. It depends on availability of the space and facility.

Sohela

Sohela or Kirtan Sohela

This is the last Sikh prayer for the day. It is recited as the last thing at the night before going to bed, and takes a couple of minutes. In a Gurdwara, the person closing the Holy Book in the evening, recites it while closing and wrapping up the Holy Book, provided he or she knows it by heart. He or she may recite or read after closing the Holy Book. If need be, another person may recite or read it.

At home, if recitation of Rahras gets late, Sohela may be recited along with Rahras, after it. Otherwise, it is recited before going to sleep.

Gurdwara Additional Programs

These are any time programs, morning or evening, but are usually undertaken in the morning Gurdwara sessions.

Katha

Katha is preaching or giving a sermon - Mostly it is a talk based on Gurbani, Sikh History (happening), or explanation of a chapter out of some standard book like Suraj-Parkash. It may be undertaken after Kirtan, or after Hukam, but before distribution of Parshad. Kathakar – the preacher, mostly sits cross-legged on the floor, or in Tabeeaa – in service (attendance) behind the Holy Granth. The management may fix up the days and times for such programs. In Gurdwaras, such programs are mostly set up in the afternoon.

Katha by the Kathakar (Preacher) is usually for one hour at a fixed time, and is a regular and not a sporadic feature.

Katha of Guru Granth Sahib can be divided into its many features, so that this section gets completed in a short time.

. A feature e.g. Bhagat Bani, Bhattan Dee Banee, etc., or a section of Guru Granth Sahib like Jappu ji Sahib, Baramah, Bawan Akhri, Salok Kabir, Salok Farid, can be taken up. It will complete the subject in a reasonable time and it will not get lingered to eternity.

Katha should not linger on and on, and if it does so, its interest and benefit gets lost

Kathakar must use restraint to say any thing out of bias or prejudice. He or she should stay neutral, and non-judgmental. He or she must adopt soft and sweet language and should never use coarse and corrosive words. He should never point anyone out, but whatever he or she says should be general. Nothing insulting or degrading should be said against any faith or about anyone. He or she should keep above criticism. Subjects creating controversy or argument must be strictly

avoided. Any opinion should be expressed in an acceptable and mild way.

Also, see on more pages in index.

Speeches

In the presence of the Holy Book, only God, Guru, and Gurbani – Scriptures, should be discussed . Do not take up any other thing. When the Sikhs take the Holy Book as their 'Living Guru,' then they need to honor it that way by avoiding every thing that can generate bitterness. To maintain the sanctity of the prayer hall, it is better to discuss any other thing elsewhere, may be privately.

Any talk or discussion in the Sangat, in which a controversy can come up, should be reserved for the after Langar hours, so that those who are not interested or want to leave, are not delayed or deprived of the holy food.

Also, read on Page shown in index.

LANGAR HALL DISCIPLINE

Langar - Community Kitchen. It is a common free kitchen.

* In Langar, food is prepared and served jointly by the Sangat, as a selfless (voluntary) service with a smile.

* This food is complimentary (free) from Gurdwara i.e. Sangat - congregation.

* Langar might have been sponsored by one or more families. At some places, it is offered by Gurdwara.

* If there is a kitchen, the Langar may be prepared in the Gurdwara. If not, it is brought from homes, prepared singly or jointly. The idea is to have the self-prepared food as a voluntary service.

* As far as possible, it should not be ordered from a restaurant.

* Langar is to teach selfless service with love.

Langar Hall Entering

* Enter the Langar hall with covered head, bare feet, and nicely washed hands. Be calm. Do not be impatient or in any hurry.

* Sit down with the others in a row. Everyone may chant together the Name of God, the True Name - "Waheguru, Satte-Naamu" etc.

* Start eating when the food is served to all and a signal to eat is given. Usually the slogan is uttered "Jo bole so nihaal, Satsri-Akaal."

* Eat food quietly and calmly, without any hurry. If by chance you have been ignored, or some item has not been served, without calling aloud, you may quietly remind the people serving there to serve you.

* You are at liberty to ask for salt, pepper, chilly, condiments, sugar etc. or anything else available for the Langar service. Some items might not be right to be served in Langar.

* Take only that much which you can eat without leaving any portion. Try not to leave Jooth – uneaten portion.

* Eat with reverence to the Guru, and God. Some consider themselves fortunate in eating Langar, and they may take it as a Parshad – the Guru's holy gift.

* After finishing, wait till others have eaten. Try to get up with the others.

* You may keep sitting and continue eating till you are done, get up only after you are finished, and do not mind even though other new ones have started sitting down on your sides, or in the rows. There is no need to hurry up, be calm and have your time.

* Do not wash your hands or mouth into your utensils, or while sitting in the row. Get up and go to wash room. For this purpose, a

devotee may offer to someone a hand wash-basin and water where he or she is sitting. It is not nice to look at.

* Clean the place if something gets spilled. If Langar hall is carpeted, take an extra care not to let anything spill.

* After eating, throw the plastic-ware into trash-bag if someone comes to collect it. If not, pick it while getting up, and dispose it off into a trash-bag or can. Someone may collect silverware (metal) or chinaware. Otherwise, throw leftover in the trash-can, take it to the sink, or to a designated place, and leave it there. You may rinse and leave it, or clean it properly as others might be doing. The best is to clean it with soap and water, or with cleaning powder. Wooden ash mixed with sand worked fine at some places in India. If dishwasher facility is available, rinse and leave such utensils there.

* One should not eat, nibble or snack in the kitchen (cooking area), or at its service counter.

* No one busy eating, should touch utensils, food, or service bowls, service spoons etc. in the kitchen, without first washing the hands with soap and water. It is convenient and nice to ask someone else to serve you rather than trying to do it yourself. At some places, or occasions, self-service is practiced, but in a proper and organized way.

Langar - Parshad and Food

Parshad Instructions

*If this discipline (cleanliness, purity, not taking or eating a portion out of it) is not observed, Parshad is rendered unfit for offering to the Guru and God, and for distribution to the Sangat.

* Parshad should not be tasted at any stage of its preparation and afterwards.

* No portion of Parshad assigned to God and Guru, should be taken out for any other purpose until it has been offered to Guru Granth Sahib, and distributed after Ardas - invocation, Hukam, and Kirpan Bhaet (Kirpan passed through it).

* Before distribution, Parshad should be cooled down to a comfortable level. Too hot Parshad is not offered to Guru Granth Sahib. If hot, it hurts the hands to serve, or to receive it on hands.

Food Instructions

Discipline for preparing Langar – Parshad, or food

* Take bath and enter the kitchen (cooking area) with clean clothes, and freshly washed hands using soap and water.

* No one in the kitchen should gossip, or go there for this purpose.

* Avoid creating unnecessary rush in the kitchen. Only those should be there who are cooking or serving.

* Do not eat or snack, while cooking.

*The mind should be occupied by Gurbani – Scriptures, Shabads – Holy Hymns, or with the Name of God (Waheguru, Waheguru, Sattu-Naamu Waheguru etc.).

* No portion of Parshad, or Langar assigned to the Guru, should be taken out for any purpose before offering it to the Guru and God, Ardas, Hukam, and passing Kirpan through every preparation.

* No one should eat inside the Langar - kitchen. Keep in the mind that when preparing Langar, you are doing so for the Guru and God.

* The Langar-containers, or service-pots are not touched with unclean hands, and preparations are kept covered. Touch things after washing hands with soap and water.

Langar - Ardas, Kirpan-Bhaet

It is invocation and passing Kirpan (small curved sword) through Parshad and all cooked items of food for Langar. According to the Sikh way, passing Kirpan through them signifies their purification and acceptance by God and the Guru. It turns it into the holy food.

Before serving Langar (food), Ardas is said. Usually, the prepared food is offered to (placed before) Guru Granth Sahib, and is removed from there after Ardas and passing Kirpan through every item, may be except water: a natural commodity.

Not for Parshad, but only for Langar, Ardas can be said in the kitchen, and Kirpan passed through all items. After this, all items are returned to their main containers, and service is started even before the end of prayer session. Langar service may continue in the Langar hall independent of the service in the prayer hall.

Also see Kirpan Bhaet in index.

Langar - Grace – Prayer

A short prayer – grace, should be said before and after taking food. A few suitable quotes from Gurbani are recited. In the Gurdwara langar, this tradition should be practiced.

Langar - Tasting

During its preparation or afterwards, Langar should not be tasted, not even for assessing its salt, spices and sugar etc. The preparations should have very mild chili or pepper, so that everyone can comfortably tolerate them. Be careful even if this is green chili. More of such things can be added later by the person eating the food, according to his or her taste.

Salt, pepper, chili, condiments, sugar, should also be served, like pickles or onions. After eating has commenced, salt etc., can be adjusted after asking those who are eating, or if they themselves inform about it. Mostly, the served food is accepted as it is.

Same way, Parshad is not tasted or used for any other purpose before Ardas, and Kirpan-Bhaet.

Langar - Sitting Arrangements

At some places, low chairs or other seats are provided, particularly for use by the handicapped. In some Gurdwaras, tables and may be chairs too, are there for anyone wishing to use them. The main idea of Langar is to sit at one level (floor) without any discrimination, and to eat with others. It is an effort to promote equality, and a step to eradicate ego.

Langar Service – Instructions

- * Everyone serving in Langar will himself or herself eat after the Sangat has finished eating.

- * It is practical to spread plastic sheets on the floor in front of Pangat – rows, to place utensils or plastic-ware on them. This will protect the carpet and floor.

- * Nothing should be served with bare hands. Use service spoons, spatulas or ladles. The use of latex or plastic gloves may be considered.

- * The glasses for water, tea etc. should be held close to their bottoms, and not at their tops (rims). Fingers should not go inside the glasses.

- * Service is given with a smile, without prejudice, and all are treated equally. Equal quantities are served to everyone. Service should be prompt, careful, without ignoring anyone or any item.

- * In Sangat, no one should be served a different food unless there is a sound reason for it e.g. some health problem. You cannot serve butter to one and not to the other.

- * The choice of selection for eating out of the served food is an individual matter. One may not like to take rice and another may not prefer a Chapatee (Roti, a flat bread). Some may like to eat condiments and onions, and others may not. Do not serve anything not acceptable to the person who is eating. Take only that thing which you will eat, and in quantity that you will finish.

- * Give only the amount that is asked for, or only a reasonable quantity. Serve carefully that the given portion gets finished, and nothing is left over. Serve food to children in the right proportion. Their parents should also take care of this.

* Do not talk while serving Langar. It is ideal to keep mouth covered with cloth.

* Do not nibble or eat anything while serving the food.

* When serving, do not hold service bowls, jugs, breads, glasses etc. against your body.

* When serving, put only that much portion that does not flow over to other compartments of the plate, if such plates are used.

Langar - Absentees

It is best if a prospective absentee informs before hand of his or her missing the Gurdwara session. This will bring economy in preparing the food and Parshad.

Langar - Ideal Service

Langar is supposed not to be closed, and the food has to be provided to the visitor at all hours of the day and night. But it may not be possible at every Gurdwara, especially in the overseas countries where a resident Sewadar – a volunteer e.g. the caretaker may not be available at all hours. At such places, leftover Langar is distributed for taking home and nothing is kept for any off time need.

Langar - Sound System

Sound System in Langar

For the benefit of Sewadars (workers) and Sangat, Langar should have extension of the prayer hall sound system.

Langar - One Dollar Lunch

It should never come to the mind of anyone that Langar is “one dollar lunch” i.e. you offer one dollar to the Holy Book and become entitled to take the community lunch. It is not just a “lunch,” but is the sanctified food. You offered a dollar or so to the Holy Book to honor it, and this thing ended there. Leaving aside some special circumstances, you justify taking Langar after attending the Gurdwara proceedings – service to God, you may have offered a dollar or two to the Holy Book or not.

Langar is free and nobody is charged for it. If someone thinks he or she has paid, such remarks are derogatory to the holy food - a gift from God and the Guru, and selfless service by the others. The people take it with humility and eat it with reverence. Some get one or two Chapatis (Roti - flat-bread) with some Dall (cooked cereal), vegetable, and take these home as Parshad for the family. Devotees may put some money into a Golak - money-box there, as a gratitude to the Lord for the food partaken, and not as its price.

LANGAR HALL PROCEDURES

If need be, you can use slippers inside the kitchen. They should be reserved for the kitchen and must not be used for going to restroom (bathroom), or out of the Langar hall. Rather than using a leather product, some prefer rubber or plastic foot wear. Anything used, should be reserved only for the kitchen.

Do not go to Langar and do no cooking with common cold, cough, fever, loose motions, motions with cramps, or with any other infectious disease like mumps, chickenpox etc. Do not cook with injury, ulcer, boil, or eczema on the hands. For a cough or sneeze, cover your mouth and nose with a napkin, look away from food and try to get away from it, dispose off napkin, and wash your hands with soap and water.

Parshad - Preparation

Karrah-Parshad – Preparation

Parshad - Tihauli Daa Parshad

It is also called Tribhawali, Trihawali, or Tihauli Daa Parshad i.e. prepared with equal parts of the three ingredients - Ataa (wheat flour), Ghee (butter oil), sugar, and to this is added three parts of water (Wheat flour 1 cup, butter oil 1 cup, sugar 1cup, water 3 cups. 1 cup equals 1 LB).

Sugar - In the United States, a little bit more of sugar makes it tastier, as the beet-root sugar here is not that sweet. Too much sugar will spoil the taste.

Wheat Flour – Wheat flour should be coarse and not fine or white. Parshad of pure cream of wheat does not stick together well (cohere, coalesce) and its grains easily scatter. About one third to half of Soojee (cream of wheat) and 2/3 to half of coarse whole-wheat flour make a good mixture.

Ghee – Butter oil. Too little butter oil makes it dry and unpleasant to swallow. On the other hand, too much oil seeps through the fingers, and may spoil clothes and carpet.

Some use butter in place of butter oil. Be careful that it is not salted. Parshad is prepared with pure butter or butter oil. Now, sometimes (not for special occasions), some may take the liberty of using plain or hydrogenated vegetable oils. Animal fat is not permitted.

Parshad - Additions

Fruits: dry or fresh, raisins, nuts, saffron, dyes, flavors, etc. are not added to Karrah Parshad. It is to maintain simplicity and uniformity of the preparation, and to keep it affordable by everyone. Parshad is

highly revered, and except the one on duty, the others should avoid touching it unnecessarily. It is kept covered and is touched with clean hands – washed with soap and water, and dried with clean, unused cloth or napkins..

Parshad for keeping longer - while preparing, it is worked up with a ladle until Ghee (butter oil) starts separating from Parshad.

Parshad - Discipline For Preparation

In the Gurdwara, it is prepared by Bhai ji (Sewadar – permanently serving there), so that it is always of the same quality.

The following repetition is to impress the discipline for preparing Parshad.

* Cleanliness - Parshad is prepared after taking bath, wearing clean clothes, and with clean hands – washed with soap and water.

* Head Cover - Head should be kept covered throughout cooking and while you are in the kitchen. No caps or hats. Have a Dupattaa (length of cloth), scarf, or Kaeskee (short cloth wrapped on head).

* Clean Hands - No part of body, even the face, hair, skin etc. should be touched while preparing it. If need be, use a fresh, clean napkin to do so. If touched, hands should be washed with soap and water.

* Attitude - humility, reverence, and devotion should prevail. All through preparing it, Jappu ji Sahib, Gurbani (Holy Hymns) should be recited. The Jaap of “Waheguru, Waheguru,” – God, my Lord, or “Satte-Naamu Waheguru” - the True Name (God), is continuously recited preferably silently. If one has to speak it out, then mouth should be kept covered to protect Parshad from getting contaminated (the fine particles of sputum).

* Talking – There should be no non-essential talk while cooking or serving food. No gossips. Keep the mind fixed on God. Remember that you are preparing a holy food for offering to the Lord and for giving to Sangat.

* Eating – there should not be any eating, snacking, or nibbling in the cooking area. No one should eat at the kitchen counter.

While eating outside, do not touch the cooked food or utensils in the kitchen, without cleaning hands with soap and water. Ask someone else to serve you.

Also, see Parshad, on pages given in index.

Langar - Preparation

Preparation of Food

To be acceptable to everyone, Langar is always vegetarian

Langar – Cleanliness, Purity

Repetition is to impress the importance of purity needed exactly like preparing Parshad. Strictly follow the same discipline for preparing Langar. The purity and cleanliness of the kitchen, utensils, mind, body, hands, and preparations is maintained. While preparing food, gossips are avoided, and the mind is kept occupied with Naam-Jaap or with recitation of Gurbani. Jappu ji Sahib is the leading Bani (Scripture) for recitation while preparing Langar or Parshad. In the kitchen, head should be kept covered, and no one should nibble or eat anything in that area.

Langar – Rasad

Grocery i.e. uncooked food, needed for preparing Langar.

Estimate - A rough estimate of items needed for Langar

A food prepared for 25, can conveniently be served to 30, may be 35, that for 50 to about 70, for 100 to 125 or so, and for 150 to 175, a few less or more. Minor adjustments might have to be made by adding a little water and appropriate amount of condiments to Daal (pulses), beans and vegetables with gravy, and a little milk to Yogurt (curds). Chili, pepper and salt should not be added inconsiderately for whatsoever reason. We should keep in the mind those who shall eat it.

Langar - Unexpected Situation

In some unexpected situation, or emergency, precooked vegetarian fast-foods can be availed. Pre-baked flat breads, Naan, and other breads are easily available. Vegetable pizza can be served, and children like it. Those who prepare such foods, well know the quantities needed.

Langar - Ready made Food

Sometimes, ready made vegetarian food might have to be served as some urgency.

If the Sangat is more than estimate, easy preparations in the needed amount can be cooked fast. Potatoes, mixed vegetables, pulses like Masar, Moongee, and plain rice can be prepared in a short time. Rice will cut down the required need of Chapatis to about one third.

Langar - Estimate for 150

Mrs. Parminder Kaur Grewal, has given the following estimates for the quantities of some raw foods for 150 guests. The quantities can be adjusted according to the estimated number of persons.

Ataa (wheat flour) 30 lb. It should make 350-400 flat breads, sufficient without additional rice. The flour should not be pure white. Its breads become hard and tough, soon. Some mix a little Maida –

fine white flour to give a good look to the bread. Full cream milk, or Yogurt added to the flour keeps breads soft. The kneaded flour may be left for a couple of hours to rise (get fermented) to make it soft. For this purpose, adding baking soda (sodium bicarbonate) should preferably be avoided, and small quantity of vegetable yeast may profitably be mixed with it. It raises the flour and produces vitamin B-Complex, too. Have the proper mix of flour for making Poorees (deep fried breads).

Rice – 20 cups (10 lb.) of rice, without additional breads (Chapati), will serve 150 persons,. To make both breads and rice, half the amount of rice (5-7 lb.) and 10-15 lb. of wheat flour (200-300 breads) should be sufficient. For Zarda – saffron colored sweet rice, 5-7 Lb., and for Kheer 3-4 Lb. of rice should do.

Vegetables – All vegetables together – Gobhi (cauliflower), carrots, green peas, potatoes, Dhaniaa (fresh coriander leaves), Pudina (fresh mint-leaves), green onions, etc. will make a total of 25-30 Lb.

Tomatoes and onion 3-5 Lb. each, ginger 1-2 Lb., and garlic ½ Lb., should be okay.

Daal- lentils (pulses) e.g. Maash (black), red beans (Raj Mah), small kidney-beans (black eyed beans) etc. 8-10 LB.

Condiments , salt, red pepper, and green pepper should be used with restraint to leave the dishes eatable by everyone. Make minimum use of chili and pepper. Excessive addition of condiments leave the preparation uneatable.

Butter - 4 Lb., and if it is butter oil, then about 3 Lb. It will mainly be used for preparing Parshad. Quantity should be reasonably more if full Langar has to be cooked with pure Ghee (butter oil). Vegetable oils should preferably be cholesterol-free. One half to ¾ gallon oil should be in stock.

Plane Yogurt – for making Raita (chickpea Yogurt) etc., 3 Gallons. Indian stores sell ready made chickpea balls. Check instructions on the packet or ask salesman and purchase the amount you need. Raita (mixed yogurt) can be made with other vegetables.

Mixed Pickle – like ‘Panch Ranga Achar’ etc. 1-2 Lb. Finely cut carrots and onions may be added to it.

Parshad – Wheat flour 3 Lb., salt free butter 3Lbs, sugar 3 Lb.. One usual 8 ounce cup measures about one pound. Adding a small quantity of Soojee (cream of wheat) to wheat flour, renders the consistency of Parshad pleasantly grainy. It makes it less sticky, but if it is much more, the flour will not bind together well. If it is butter, it should be slightly more to burn down to butter-oil. Beet-root sugar is less sweet and it should be added slightly more. Parshad should not be over sweet, over dry, or over oily.

Langar –Simple Langar

food, should be kept very simple, but usually it is not. Commonly, a sweet-dish (dessert) is also there e.g. Kheer - sweet rice pudding; ice cream; fine saeviaan (sweet noodles,); or sweets. Some also serve tea, coffee, and maybe cold drinks as well. There is no end to Sewa - selfless service. Unless it is the Gurdwara service, the Sangat provides Langar in turn. Sweets and fruits may be brought by other devotees.

Langar - Condiments

Salt, pepper, chili, are served. Also, onion, pickles, Chutneys etc. are provided.

IMPORTANT TOPICS

Ardas

Humble prayer, Invocation, or Supplication

We pray to God, with the Guru and Guru Granth Sahib as a witness

Also see Ardas in index for more pages on the in index.

Ardas - Panthic Ardas

A Panthic-Ardas is the standard, full length invocation approved by the Sikh World.

It is said after the end of a prayer-session in Gurdwara. It is made to God, standing before the Holy Book. It is also made before the start of any Sikh ceremony or a religious function anywhere. Even other Sikh functions may be made after a Panthic Ardas.

A Panthic Ardas (full length) should be as short as possible, with no repetitions and unnecessary additions, may be of the Holy Hymns.

The stanzas (quotes) from Gurbani should not be quoted within the main body of Ardas, and their limited number (a few of them) may be used before it.

Ardas - Chhotee Ardas

Short invocation. It is said before opening the Holy Book.

Chhotee Ardas – It is only the recitation of the starting Paurree (step) of Ardas itself. This step is composition of the Tenth Guru Gobind Singh. It starts with “Ardas. Ik-Oankar Vaheguroo jee kee fat.eh. Sree Bhagaut.ee jee sahaa-ae.....” to “D.assaan’ Pat.shaahee-aan d.ee jot.e Sree Guroo Granth Sahib Bolo jee Vahaeguroo.”

To the Chhotee Ardas is added the supplication to the Holy Book seeking permission to open it, and for the Guru’s Hukam.

Some, at the individual level, first say Ardas and then close the Holy Granth.

As a set precedence, Ardas is said after closing the Holy Book.

Ardas for Offerings

It will be nice if a Chhoti Ardas is quietly (in a whisper) or silently made by a Sewadar at the time when an offerings in kind or coin is made. It will protect the Panthic Ardas from becoming too long. The local Sangat can decide to adopt a certain procedure. If such offerings have to be mentioned at the end of Ardas, this should be kept very brief and free from repetitions.

Ardasia

When doing Ardas, the Ardasia (one who leads it) should stand with folded hands, make no gestures, and stand calmly, but firmly. The hands are held touching both the palms and fingers uncrossed. Slight crossing of the fingers may by itself take place. While doing Ardas, he or she should not hold in the hands a Kirpan: sword, arrow, or any other weapon. Invocation projects humility, but a weapon in the hand becomes its antithesis.

Ardas - Raj Karegaa Khalsaa

“Ageaa bhaee Akaal kee, Raj karae gaa khalsaa etc.”

Most of the people think that this piece of poetry belongs to the Tenth Master Guru Gobind Singh. It is not so. It was composed by Giani Gian Singh and is given in his book *Panth-Parkash* (Bhasha Vibhag Punjab, 1987), at its page 353. Later, some others added to it the lines like “Raj karae gaa khalsaa” etc. Satbir Singh, historian, in his *Sada Itihas*, gives a different source of it

In most of the historical Gurdwaras, such as Harimandir Sahib, Amritsar, this piece of poetry is not sung after Ardas. A Gurdwara is for everyone from any faith and many avoid singing it lest someone feels hurt. It is another thing, that some may translate Khalsa as the “pure-ones,” but in fact Khalsa means property of the King (Guru) i.e. those who have faith in the Guru (Gurmukhs - devotees). But apparently, it is taken by the most as, “The Sikhs will rule,” although it may not mean this and the real rule is of the spiritual domain. In fact the term Khalsa is used for an Amritdhari Sikh, the one properly inducted into the Sikh faith by drinking Amrit.

To sing the above ‘Dohra’ (type of poetry) is not essential, but if some need to sing something after Ardas, suitable Hymns or quotes may be selected from Gurbani rather than singing a composition by anyone other than the Guru. There is no shortage of such a material in Guru Granth Sahib, and in the Bani of Guru Gobind Singh. An example is –

Gagan dmamaa baajeou pareou neesaanaae ghaaou
Khaetu ju maandeo suurmaa abb joojhan ko daao
Sooraa so pahechaa-nee-aae ju larae deen kae haet
Purjaa purjaa katt maraae kabhoo naa chhadaae khaetu

Kabir-1105-4

Hukam – Inspiration

Hukam is the order of the Guru i.e. an inspiration.

It is called Hukam, Hukam-Namah, Shabad, or Vaak – order, edict, Holy Hymn, or Word of the Guru. This is inspiration for the day.

The person in Tabeaa – in attendance - sitting behind the Holy Book, recites some appropriate quotes from Gurbani, gracefully uncovers the Holy Book, and starts reading a Shabad out of it. This is Hukam – order of the Guru: a Holy Hymn at random. Along with it, one who reads Hukam or someone else, keeps moving Chaur (hair wisp) over the Holy Granth. When taking Hukam, it should be carefully read out and attempt should not be made to say any word out of it without reading. This is to avoid any error in reading or phonation. His Hukam (revealed Bani) should be recited with no minor error even.

Hukam should be recited in a reasonably loud voice, reverently, calmly, with humility and clearly, without any hurry. The Holy Book is opened at random as a set precedence at about its middle part, and Shabad – the Holy Hymn, is recited from its start at the top on the left side page. If Shabad starts at the back of that (previous) page, then it is read (started) from there.

Shabad, Holy Hymn, is read from its start to the end however long it may be. Some Shabads are full-page length. If it is from the area wherein the script continues without breaks (continuously), the page of the Holy book may be changed. Such continuous Bani e.g. Jappu ji Sahib, Salok of Bhagat Kabir or Sheikh Farid, is in the beginning, or close to the end of Guru Granth Sahib. Unless we intentionally do so (open the Granth not at its middle part), we never get a Shabad from these areas. Some, may change the page if the Hymn is not according to the occasion, but others do not approve it. The page-change if desired, may be made to the right or left.

Sant Nand Singh used to take three chances to get a Shabad suitable to the need or occasion. Failing in three chances to get the right Shabad (in clear yes or no), he would postpone Hukam to the next day to get direction from the Guru, provided the time permitted. The professional Bhai (brother – caretaker of the Holy Granth) roughly know the areas of the Holy Book for the Shabads appropriate to the occasions, and try to open it there. Generally, it is not considered right, and it should be a random Shabad.

The right Shabad is that which gives direction about your need, and it may or may not be according to your desire – it may be in positive or in negative to your wish. Trying more than once to get the decisive Shabad is a personal choice. Usually, the chance Shabad at the very first instance is relied on, and in general the people do not accept trials.

Also see Hukam in index, for more pages on the subject.

Hukam - Translation

If the translation of the Hukam is done, it should be direct, very short, with no elaboration, quotes and stories. If the Holy Hymn is long

one, then, only its gist should be given. Total time of the Gurdwara session has to be kept in the mind. As well, children cannot fix their attentions on such things for more than a couple of minutes, and they will not follow a complicated description.

In the overseas countries, it is essential to translate Hukam into English.

Hukam - Katha of Hukam

It is different from the plain, straightforward translation of the Hukam. One may take his or her allotted time to elaborate and comment on the Shabad. It is a descriptive sermon on the Hukam. History, anecdotes, and quotations from Gurbani and other acceptable sources may be added.

Paath of Guru Granth Sahib

Paath – Recitation of Guru Granth Sahib

Reading of Guru Granth Sahib may be a Sehj Paath, Akhand-Paath, Saptahak-Paath, Sampat-Paath.

Paath –Enjoy It

Go for doing Paath with clean body, clean clothes, well washed hands, and clean mind.

Recite Paath with love and devotion. Enjoy Paath.

Feel as if you are in the presence of God.

When reading, perceive the blessings of God.

Do Paath in the attitude of submission to the Lord.

Do not hurry through Paath unless there is need for hurry.

Try to read at least occasionally, may be some portions, in tune. You will enjoy it.

Some times, when doing Paath, try to go into Vaeraag (a loving detachment). It will take your mind to the higher levels, and immerse you in ecstasy.

There is a liberal choice for doing Paath –

Paath – Starting a Paath

Paath – Recitation of Guru Granth Sahib.

Starting It, Time and Place

There is no restriction of time and place to start and to continue Paath.

Mostly, a Paath is started in the morning hours, and reading can be done in your fixed or spare time. There is no binding.

Parshad is offered to the Guru Granth Sahib, Ardas is said and Paath is started.

There is no limit of the portion to be read every day.

Bhog of Paath can be set when the Paath gets completed.

Paath - Sehj Paath

It is a Sehj Paath - routine recitation with no restriction of time or days. It is a Paath at leisure, without any hurry.

Paath - Akhand-Paath

It is continuous recitation from its start to end without any break. It usually takes 48 hours, may be slightly less or more. Some think that only Amritdharis should do an Akhand Paath. Mostly, five persons do this recitation, but there is no strict limit. It should be done after full bath including the head wash, and changing to the washed, clean clothes. Ladies can equally take part in any Paath, Akhand-Paath as well.

Paath - Saptahak-Paath

This reading is usually from the morning till the evening, and is completed in 7 days. Two or more persons may do it. Bhog – culmination of Paath, is on the seventh day in the morning.

Sampatt-Paath

keeping in mind the motive, a certain suitable Hymn is selected from the Holy Granth. It may be written down on a paper. Paath of the Holy Book is started right from the beginning, first by reading the selected Hymn from paper or by reciting it by heart from memory. Thereafter, this selected Hymn is recited after reading every Shabad (Hymn) in its sequence in the Holy Book. This selected Shabad (Sampatt) is recited also at the end of the recitation of the Holy Book. This is continuous reading without a break and may take 7 to 10 days or a little less or even more to complete it. Any number of persons may participate in this recitation. Its Bhog – culmination, is performed in the morning.

Note

1. For correct phonation of every word, recitation of the Holy Book should be done by actual reading.
2. Ladies can participate in every type of Paath.
3. As a page marker, one may use a paper with a Shabad written on it. For this purpose, do not fold the corner of a page.
4. Guru Granth Sahib should be touched with hands freshly washed and cleaned with fresh (new) napkin or clean (unused) towel.

Paath - Bhog Ceremony

Bhog ceremony of Paath - It is culmination i.e. completion, of the recitation of Guru Granth Sahib. Almost all Paaths are completed before the noon. Bhog of Paath as the last ceremony on death is commonly performed in the afternoon, but it is not necessary. Akhand-Paath even on a sad occasion is mostly completed in the morning hours. The modern man has become very busy and now, no such precedence is observed.

Paath - Bhog of Paath

Bhog of Paath is the end of reading i.e. completion of Paath. Bhog of Paath is started from “Slok Mehlaa Nauvaan” at Guru Granth Page No. 1426. After reading the Sloks, mostly, Raag-Maala is read. It is continued with the end of Sloks at Guru Granth - Page 1429. Most of the Gurmukhs, read starting five Paurrees of Jappu ji Sahib, after reading Chhota Anand Sahib. As a final step, the last Slok of Jappu ji Sahib is read. Thereafter Chhota Anand Sahib is recited, or sung. It is followed by Ardas to thank the Lord for successful completion of Paath.

Chhota Anand Sahib is first five and the last Paurree of Anand Sahib. Complete Anand Sahib – 40 Paurrees, is at Guru Granth - Page 917.

Variations in the Bhog of Paath

Some variations are made for different types, and purposes of doing Paath.

Paath - Madh of Paath

The middle of Paath

Parshad on reaching the middle of Paath

The Holy Book, Guru Granth Sahib, has 1430 pages. Its middle is considered at page No. 705, with recitation of Shabad at the bottom of the page, “Aade pooran madhe pooran ante pooran Parmaesurah.”

In every type of Paath, before reaching this Shabad, a fresh Parshad is prepared, Ardas (full) is said on reaching this Shabad, and it is distributed after Kirpan Bhaet.

Paath - Langar After Paath

Langar is the community food

Mostly, after Akhand Paath and Sampat Paath, Langar (food) is served to the Sangat. Langar is served may be it is the occasion of joy or sorrow, but it is not necessary and is a personal choice. Some may serve snacks, cold drinks, tea, or coffee. Langar or snacks may be served after any Paath. There is no set rule for it.

Pathee

A Pathee should learn Paath-recitation of Guru Granth Sahib, and Gurbani e.g. Nit Nem. Paathee is anyone who recites Paath (Scripture). It should be a must that Paath, including recitation of Guru Granth Sahib, has been learnt from some individual, institution, through live instructions.

Anyone else, may derive some benefit from audio-tapes, videotapes, CDs, computers etc.

Paath - Who Can Do Paath?

Reading the Holy Book can be done by anyone who can and desires to do it. No restrictions. Amritdhari or not, a Sikh or anyone else, everyone can read the Holy Book. The body and clothes should be clean. Mostly, the people open the Holy Book after taking a bath, and changing to the clean clothes. If one is not well, the one may go to the Holy Book after washing the face and hands (feet), provided the body and clothes are clean. Even today, many sit down for the Raul – turn, to do Akhand-Paath, after washing the hair, taking bath and changing to the washed (clean) clothes.

When doing any type of Paath (Guru Granth Sahib, Nit Nem, any other Bani), one should not be under the influence of intoxicants (including alcohol and tobacco), must not have used these that day before Paath, and must not carry any such thing on his or her person.

Paath and women

A woman can do Paath – read Guru Granth Sahib, whether she is in menses or not. She also can recite Nit Nem or any type of Gurbani without any restraint. She can do every type of Paath including random reading of Guru Granth Sahib, Sehj-Paath, Akhand-Paath, Saptahak Paath, or Sampatt-Paath etc. Also, she can take Vaak - Hukam. The only thing is, man or woman, the body and clothes should be clean. Gurubani instructs everyone to do Paath (woman or man), as well as he or she may be of any caste, color or faith, no discrimination of any sort.

Parshad

Parshad is a gift from the Guru. Krrah-Parshad is sanctified pudding.

Usually, Parshad means Krrah-Parshad.

As a precedence, wherever (Gurdwara, or elsewhere), a Diwan – Guru's Darbar (holy gathering) is held, fresh Krrah-Parshad is prepared. In Gurdwaras where Sangat attends on some particular days only, but permanent Sewadar (caretaker) is there, preparing Parshad on non-Sangat days is the choice of the management. On such days, some

other type of permitted thing e.g. Phullian (frosted puffed rice), Patasae (Patashae. Small sugar cakes), Makhaanae (sugar clusters), dry fruit etc. may be used.

Leftover Parshad

Fresh Parshad is distributed. If some previously prepared Parshad is leftover, it may be added to the fresh Parshad. It is said, the leftover Parshad should not be reheated. Can it be mixed with the freshly prepared Parshad. Yes, it can be added to that. It may be mixed with the leftover fresh Parshad. These are minor things.

Parshad from another Gurdwara

Sometimes, Parshad brought to Gurdwara from any other Gurdwara (Amritsar, Hazoor Sahib, Patna Sahib etc.), is mixed with the freshly prepared Parshad and distributed in the Sangat. This way, a small quantity of Parshad from a holy place, can be given to a large number of Sangat. This mixing should be done after Ardas, Hukam and Kirpan Bhaet of the fresh Parshad.

Parshad - Re-offering Parshad

Parshad once offered, should not be offered to the Guru, again. Only fresh Parshad is offered.

Parshad - Source

Parshad is prepared in the Gurdwara, but it may come prepared from anywhere. It may be sent by anyone. the condition is that it should be prepared according to its discipline – clean body, clean clothes, head covered, and recitation of Gurbani when prepared.

Parshad for Odd Hours

See Parshad given above.

At odd hours, if Krrah-Parshad is finished, sweet puffed rice, sugar cakes, sugar clusters, dry fruit etc. is given.

Parshad to Keep for Long Time

Pinnee-Parshad - Pinnee means sweet cereal (mostly wheat flour) ball. Panjeeree is sweet cereal powder. These are given as Parshad to keep for a long time. Chhotee-Ilaechi – green cardamoms, dry fruit (almonds, other nuts, raisins); Kooza-Misree - sugar-crystals etc. may be given as Parshad to keep for still longer time.

Who Should Prepare Parshad?

Karrah Parshad may be prepared by anyone, anywhere, according to the discipline of preparing it, and brought to the Gurdwara, may be it is for start or Bhog (culmination) of any type of Paath (recitation) of Guru Granth Sahib, or it is an Akhand Paath – nonstop recitation.

Sewa - Service

Some services are provided by the devotees independently or jointly, by Gurdwaras, and other institutions or organizations.

Sewa

Selfless i.e. voluntary Service

Sewa is selfless service and it is very important in the Sikh World. Cleaning the used utensils in Langar, and shoes of the Sangat in the Gurdwara, are out of the top Sewas. Help to clean the Gurdwara including rest-rooms, cooking Langar and serving it, and maintaining Gurdwara premises, are usual Sewas. Still, an important service in India is serving fresh, clean, drinking water to the people, and even to the animals. Such a water-dispensing stand is called a Chhabeel. The people render selfless service while reciting the Name of God.

Voluntary service is offered at hospitals, or at institutions serving the orphans, handicapped and sick. First-aid is provided, the poor and needy are helped, medicines are distributed. Free, clothes and blankets are provided, free food stands are run.

Some of the others give free academic or religious education. Surgeons, specialists, general doctors, engineers, architects and others help individuals or institutions. Anyone can do whatever he or she likes. There is no end to it. Sewa is part and parcel of the Sikh life.

You may come across a container with the label “Sewa” It is a can to put in trash, a ‘Service.’

Especially in the overseas countries, disposable plastic-ware has mostly eradicated the selfless service of cleaning utensils, or has pushed it to the background. But still, it is of much use. One can transform it into the Sewa of another kind. Electric fans and air-conditioning has taken away the Sewa of manually fanning the Sangat.

Sewadar – Ideal Sewadar

Sewadar – a person serving the Guru (Gurdwara) in one form or the other. A Sewadar should be humble, polite, and sweet. He or she should be well versed in his or her trade, ever ready to learn, as well as to teach and share his or her knowledge. He or she should be free from ego of what he or she knows, does, and can do. Sewadar is a Gurmukh – God oriented person, and is the role model to lead the community for its spiritual uplift.

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AUTHOR

Dr. Kulwant Singh Khokhar, is a surgeon retired from his own practice in India, and is well cared for in his inner circle of established scholars, particularly in the United States of America. He is an eager writer, and the book in hand is his 16th. The 17th is also with the printer.

The Author was born on 6th October 1923 at Lalamusa in District Gujrat, Punjab. His father S. Mela Singh Khokhar, and his mother Mrs. Isar Kaur Khokhar were God oriented and devoted Sikhs. His father was a railway officer. He is the fifth in line among the six brothers and one sister.

He was brought up in the Northwestern Frontier of India. His educational background includes Bachelor's in Science from Sikh National College, Lahore. He had his professional education from Daya Nand Medical School, Ludhiana, and Government Medical College, Amritsar. From Amritsar, he studied up to MS – Master of Surgery.

In 1948, he married Mrs. Bhagwant Kaur Khokhar, daughter of Mrs Narain Kaur and Sardar Sahib Sohan Singh Sokhi, Jamshedpur, Bihar. They were blessed with two sons and two daughters.

He joined the Punjab Medical Service, and served at Rahon in Jalandhar, Kharkhoda in District Rohtak, and at Bhagowal in District Gurdaspur. He was selected in P.C.M.S. and posted as in-charge of Civil Hospital at Kullu. He resigned to be close to his elderly parents, and established his medical practice at his home town Batala.

Out of his children, the three of them, became medical doctors. Jatinder Kaur married Dr. Baljit Singh Sidhu and became Jatinder Kaur Sidhu. Arvinder Kaur married Dr. Ghanshyam C. Barot and changed her name to Arvinder Kaur Barot (Arvinder K. Barot). Dr. Manmohan Singh Khokhar married Mrs. Baljinder Kaur, and Mr. Gurinder Singh Khokhar to Mrs. Satinder Kaur. In due course of time, whole of the family, including himself, migrated to the United States of America.

Out of the teachers at the medical college, he became a friend of Dr. Karam Singh Grewal, Dr. Man Singh Nirankari, Dr. S.S. Manchanda and Dr. Harcharan Singh. His life evolved in association with these friends. Later, he became a friend of S. Sobha Singh Artist. The Artist, played a significant role in elevating his mind. In the spiritual domain, he was benefited by Saint Balwant Singh of Umarpura.

He was inspired by his wife Bhagwant Kaur Khokhar, to write this book. At 77, married for 50 years, after a short illness, she unexpectedly left for her heavenly abode on December 12, 2002.

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